A

TREATISE

ON THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

FINANCES OF FRANCE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

TREATISE

ON THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

FINANCES of FRANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By Mr. NECKER.

Ubi igitur animus meus ex multis miseriis & periculis requievit, non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium conterere.
SALLUST.

Translated from the genuine FRENCH Edition, 1784,

By THOMAS MORTIMER, Esq.

Author of the Elements of COMMERCE, POLITICS, and FINANCES.

And Dedicated, by Permission to the MARQUIS of LANDSDOWN.

VOLUME III.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE Logographic Press,
AND SOLD BY
J. WALTER, PRINTING-HOUSE-SQUARE, BLACK-FRIARS; J. SEWELL, CORNHILL; T. LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER-ROW; J. JOHNSTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-ARD; AND J. ROBSON, NEW BOND STREET.
MDCCLXXXV.



CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME III.

CHAP. I.

PRELIMINARY diſcourſe on the current coins Page 1

CHAP. II.

On the ſtandard and weight of the coins in France 4

CHAP. III.

Profit of the Sovereign on the coinage of the ſpecie 8

CHAP. IV.

Of the advantages or inconveniences ariſing from the profit made by the King on the coinage of the ſpecie 12

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. V.

On the ceſſion by the Sovereign of his profit on the coinage of the ſpecie to individuals 28

CHAP. VI.

On alterations in the ſtandard, weight, and numerary value of the ſpecie 34

CHAP. VII.

On the exportation and melting of the national ſpecie 46

CHAP. VIII.

On the quantity of ſpecie in France 57

CHAP. IX.

On the progreſſive increaſe of the circulating ſpecie in France 68

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. X.

On the advantages or inconveniences resulting from an abundance of circulating ſpecie 79

CHAP. XI.

Conſiderations on luxury and its progreſſive increaſe 94

CHAP. XII.

On the fortunes of financiers 123

CHAP. XIII.

Reflections on the ſolicitations of the great 138

CHAP. XIV.

On the places that ennoble their poſſeſſors 148

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. XV.

On aſylums for mendicity. 162

CHAP. XVI.

Inquiries relative to the hoſpitals in the kingdom. 179

CHAP. XVII.

Reflections on the internal regulations of priſons 205

CHAP. XVIII.

A particular arrangement relative to one claſs of priſoners 229

CHAP. XIX.

Reflections on the commerce of corn 231

CHAP. XX.

Inquiries on the clearing of waſte land 237

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. XXI.

Reflections on the intereſt of money, the maintenance of public credit, and the circulation of ſpecie 241

CHAP. XXII.

On the general eſtabliſhment formed at Paris, inſtead of pawn brokers, and commonly called Mount de Piété 294

CHAP. XXIII.

Obſervations on life annuities 300

CHAP. XXIV.

Of patriotic aſſiſtance 306

CHAP. XXV.

On the right of ſucceſſion to the effects of aliens dying in the kingdom, without being naturalized 314

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. XXVI.

Of bank notes and the diſcounting bank or Caiſſe d'Eſcompte 323

CHAP. XXVII.

On regularity in the Royal Exchequer 354

CHAP. XXVIII.

Ideas on the eſtabliſhment of a general board for reſearches and informations 359

CHAP. XXIX.

On the economy of time 367

CHAP. XXX.

On the ſpirit of ſyſtem 380

CHAP. XXXI.

On the nomination to the offices of intendants of the provinces 384

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. XXXII.

On the change of principles and perſons in the adminiſtration of the Finances 392

CHAP. XXXIII.

Conciſe enumerations of the ſources of the power of France 406

CHAP. XXXIV.

On war 409

CHAP. XXXV.

Other reflections on the ſame ſubject 442

CHAP. XXXVI.

And laſt 456

General table of the groſs ſums and their amount in Engliſh money 470

A

Treatiſe on the Adminiſtration

OF THE

FINANCES OF FRANCE.

CHAP. I.

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE ON THE CURRENT COINS.

THE circulating ſpecie of a country, whether it be conſidered as the legal medium, admitted in barter, or as the reſult of the advantages acquired by commerce, offers ſeveral important ſubjects for reflection, every one of which is narrowly connected with the adminiſtration of the finances: I ſhall diſcuſs them ſeparately, and annex to that diſcuſſion as

I have hitherto done, thoſe poſitive informations which render abſtract ideas more uſeful, and at the ſame time facilitate their comprehenſion. I ſhall begin by giving a diſtinct account of the ſtandard, and weight of the French coins; I ſhall explain in what conſiſts the profit made by the ſovereign on their fabrication; and I ſhall inquire into the advantages, or inconveniences reſulting from that profit, and from the ceſſion that government has ſo frequently made of it, to private individuals. I ſhall enlarge on the conſequences of the alterations that might be made in the intrinſic value of the ſpecie, and I ſhall give my opinion on the laws that prohibit the melting and exportation of the national coin. I ſhall afterwards, endeavour to eſtimate the quantity of ſpecie circulating in France, and its relative proportion to that of the reſt of Europe: I ſhall fix the attention on the national progreſs of this branch of the riches of the ſtate, and on the conſequences that may reſult from that progreſs; and I ſhall conclude, by inquiring in a general manner, what degree of importance ought to be ſet on an abund-

ance

ance of gold and ſilver, and on the conſequently natural increaſe of the circulating ſpecie.

NOTHING on my part ſhall be neglected, to throw the greateſt poſſible light on this ſubject, and at the ſame time to avoid prolixity: theſe two eſſential conditions are perhaps very cloſely connected with each other; for truths are circumſcribed within a fixed and determined ſpace, and error alone, or looſe ideas range through an indefinite ſpace.

CHAP. II.

ON THE STANDARD AND WEIGHT OF THE COINS IN FRANCE.

GOLD COINS.

THIRTY new louis d'ors, of twenty-four livres each, ought to weigh a mark of eight ounces.

BUT their fabrication is reckoned lawful, when the louis d'ors want only fifteen grains per each mark, of the weight preſcribed by the ſtatutes; and this allowance is called the *remedy of weight*.

THE ſtandard of louis d'ors of twenty-four livres each, is fixed at twenty-two carats, and pure gold is reputed to be of twenty-

twenty-four carats: thus in gold coins, that are perfectly conformable to the ſtandard determined by law, there are two parts of braſs allay, and twenty-two parts of pure gold.

But they are accounted lawful money when the ſtandard of louis d'ors is of twenty-one carats $\frac{2}{3}\frac{2}{4}$, that is to ſay, when that ſtandard differs only by $\frac{1}{3}\frac{0}{4}$ parts of a carat, from the degree of fineneſs preſcribed by the ſtatutes; and this allowance is called the *remedy of law*.

SILVER COINS.

Eight ſix livres pieces and three tenths, ought to weigh a mark of eight ounces.

But they are deemed lawful currency, when the pieces differ only by thirty-ſix grains per each mark, from the weight preſcribed by the ſtatutes.

The ſtandard of ſilver coins is fixed at eleven deniers, and pure ſilver is of twelve

deniers; thus in ſilver coins exactly conformable to the ſtandard preſcribed by law, there is one part of braſs allay, to eleven of pure ſilver.

But they are current, when the ſtandard of three livres, and ſix livres pieces, is of ten deniers and twenty-one grains; that is to ſay, when it differs only by three-twenty fourths of a denier from the degree of fineneſs preſcribed by law.

COPPER AND MIXED COINS.

The mixed coins that are current in France, are two ſous pieces, equivalent to a penny Engliſh, and one ſous and a half pieces, equal to three farthings.

One hundred and twelve two ſous pieces ought, according to the regulation made in 1738, to weigh a mark of eight ounces; but they cannot be refuſed, when one hundred and ſixteen make up that weight.

The

THE ſtandard fixed by the ſtatute, was two and a half deniers of pure ſilver and nine and a half of braſs, and the allowance, or *remedy of law* was fixed at four-twenty-fourths of a denier.

WE cannot give any exact information on the one ſous and a half pieces, they are compoſed of a mixture of various metals: a part of them was coined in the thirteenth century, and the moſt recent fabrication took place in the beginning of the eighteenth.

THERE are alſo, in circulation, pieces of one ſous, or a halfpenny Engliſh, of two liards, or a farthing, and of one liard, or a half farthing, but every one of theſe coins is entirely of braſs.

CHAP. III.

PROFIT OF THE SOVEREIGN ON THE COINAGE OF THE SPECIE.

GOLD COINS.

THE mints of the kingdom purchaſe gold at the rate of ſeven hundred and nine livres per mark of eight ounces, at the ſtandard of twenty-one carats, and twenty-two thirty ſeconds.

A MARK of eight ounces makes thirty louis d'ors of the value of ſeven hundred and twenty livres.

THE expences of coinage and the waſte, amount to about two livres.

THUS

THUS the profit made by the ſovereign is reduced to nine livres per mark.

WHICH gives one, and four-fifteenths, per cent.

THE profit on coinage was formerly much more conſiderable.

GOLD, at the above ſtandard, was only paid for at the rate of ſix hundred and ſixty-nine livres two ſous and a ſixth, from the time of making the tariff in 1726, untill 1729; then, the profit made by the ſovereign was forty-eight livres, ſeventeen ſous and five ſixths, after deducting the expences of coinage and the waſte.

THIS gave a profit of ſeven, and five ſixteenths per cent.

THE price of gold was increaſed a ſixtieth in 1729, and again in the ſame proportion in 1755: but theſe alterations were only authoriſed by proclamations of the council.

THIS

THIS increaſe in the price of gold, reduced the profit of the ſovereign to five, and eleven twentieths per cent in 1729, and to three, and nine elevenths per cent in 1755.

THE profit continued in that proportion untill 1771, when the rate now ſubſiſting was eſtabliſhed: but adminiſtration frequently gave up its right, in favour of individuals whom it wiſhed to gratify.

SILVER COINS.

THE mints of France purchaſe ſilver, at the rate of forty-eight livres nine ſous per mark of eight ounces, at the ſtandard of ten deniers, and twenty-one grains.

A MARK gives eight ſix livres pieces and three tenths, that is to ſay, a ſum equivalent to forty-nine livres ſixteen ſous.

THE expences of coinage and waſte, amount to about fourteen and a half ſous; thus the profit of the ſovereign is reduced to twelve and a half ſous per mark.

WHICH

WHICH gives a profit of one, and ſeven-twenty-fourths per cent.

THIS profit was alſo formerly more conſiderable.

ACCORDING to the rate eſtabliſhed in 1726, the directors of the mints were to purchaſe ſilver at the above ſtandard for forty-ſix livres ſeven and a quarter ſous only: thus the profit of the ſovereign amounted to two livres, fourteen, and ſeven twelfth ſous per mark, after deducting the expences that is to ſay, to five, and ſix ſeventhſ per cent.

THE proclamations of the council publiſhed in 1729 and 1755, having increaſed the price of ſilver and of gold, by a ſixtieth, the profit of the ſovereign was reduced to four, and one-eighth per cent, from 1729 to 1755, and to two, and eleven twenty ſeventhſ per cent from 1755 to 1771.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

OF THE ADVANTAGES OR INCONVENIENCES ARISING FROM THE PROFIT MADE BY THE KING, ON THE COINAGE OF THE SPECIE.

THE diſcuſſion of this queſtion has often led to oppoſite extremes. Some have looked on the profit made by the ſovereign on the coinage of the ſpecie, as a tax that muſt neceſſarily expel gold and ſilver from the country, and cauſe theſe metals to be carried elſewhere.

IT is a merchandiſe, it was ſaid, and it muſt be more abundant in thoſe places where it meets with greateſt encouragement.

OTHERS, on the contrary, pretended that the profit made by the king on the coinage of the ſpecie was a political ſtroke. When the ſovereign it was ſaid, by means of his ſtamp, aſſigns a value in his dominions, of one hundred and two, or one hundred and three, to a certain weight of gold and ſilver that coſts him only one hundred, theſe metals having thus acquired a ſupernatural value peculiar to the country, cannot be exported, becauſe they will loſe abroad, the over value given them by the ſovereign's authority. Therefore, they concluded, that the profit made by the ſovereign on the coinage of the national ſpecie was the ſureſt method to prevent its exportation.

I AM of opinion that neither of theſe hypotheſis are exact.

UNDOUBTEDLY, gold and ſilver are a merchandize, ſince theſe metals are bought and ſold, and their price is liable to certain variations; but we ought not to conclude from this peculiar quality, that gold and ſilver will belong in the greateſt quan-

tities to the nations that give the beſt price for them. Though a private man ſhould declare that he will take a crown piece for ſixty-five pence, he would not be minded, if he had nothing to give in exchange for it, or if he were actually fool enough to barter ſixty-five pence, againſt a crown piece, his fortune would be expended in one day.

THE caſe is exactly the ſame with nations: thoſe that ſhould not have any thing to demand in balance of their exportations, would acquire neither gold nor ſilver, let the conditions impoſed on the admiſſion of theſe metals into the national mints be what they might; and if the ſovereign took the reſolution to purchaſe them at a price much above the current value, the ſpecie he would give in exchange, would be immediately melted, and the continual ſale of the ſame gold and ſilver would very ſoon clearly ſhew him his folly.

LET us ſuppoſe, on the contrary, that a merchant will not take a crown piece for more than fifty-eight pence; if he has mer-

chandizes to ſell, that will not hinder others from trading with him: but they will take care to pay for them at a rate ſomething leſs than their real price, to indemnify themſelves for the loſs that ſhould be ſuſtained on the ſpecie that would be given in exchange.

It is eaſy to apply this example to the general tranſactions of nations towards each other.

Lastly, experience ſtrengthens this mode of reaſoning. From 1726 untill 1755, the profit made in France by the ſovereign, was, as we have ſeen, much more conſiderable than at preſent; and yet during that ſpace of time, large quantities of gold and ſilver were imported into the kingdom, and coined into current ſpecie.

We ſhould likewiſe be miſtaken, as I ſaid before, by pretending that the king's profit on the coinage of the ſpecie, will put a ſtop to its exportation. In fact, if France was to owe to other nations, it would be forced to acquit the debt with gold

gold and ſilver, and the national ſpecie would be exported, without reſpect to the price given by the ſovereign for the metals employed in the coinage; for it is impoſſible for a nation to purchaſe and to owe, without paying.

THUS, the profit made in France by the ſovereign on the coinage of the ſpecie cannot hinder the importation, nor the exportation of gold and ſilver: that profit is a trifling object of no weight againſt the prevailing force of the balance of commerce.

WE are now going to endeavour to point out, under what views the profit made by the king on the ſpecie, ought to be conſidered.

THE demands of jewellers, goldſmiths, and ſimilar manufacturers, being circumſcribed within very narrow limits, the greateſt part of the gold and ſilver imported into France, and remaining there, is neceſſarily carried to the mints: the ſovereign may therefore be looked on as the principal purchaſer of the gold and ſilver that

that are accumulated in the kingdom. Let us now ſuppoſe, the ſovereign purchaſes, at the rate of cent per cent, any given weight whatever of theſe metals, on which he immediately ſets a value of one hundred and two, by means of the image thereon ſtamped in his name; it is entirely the ſame, as if he returned weight for weight, and kept two per cent for coinage. Thus, the moſt exact idea that can be given of the profit made by the king on the coinage of the ſpecie, is by looking on that profit, as a tax impoſed on the greateſt part of the gold and ſilver imported into the kingdom, or which is the ſame thing, as a tax impoſed on the payment of the balance of commerce due to France by other nations.

Let us now endeavour to aſcertain the preciſe conſequence of ſuch a duty.

The balance of commerce in favour of France, is the reſult of the ſuperiority of its exportations over its importations; it is therefore the totality of national exports, that bears the tax eſtabliſhed on the

effective payment of the balance due to the kingdom by foreigners.

LET us next call to mind that the king gains one and four fifteenths per cent, on the coinage of gold, and one, and ſeven-twenty fourths per cent, on that of ſilver: ſuppoſing therefore, the annual coinage of theſe two ſorts of ſpecie, to be about forty-five millions of livres in times of peace, the profit of the ſovereign on that coinage would be about ſix hundred thouſand livres; and as the exportations of the kingdom amount to about three hundred millions of livres, it reſults that the profit, may be compared to a tax of one-fifth per cent, levied on the whole of the national exports.

I NOW offer a very ſimple method to aſcertain exactly, the conſequences of the profit made by the ſovereign on the coinage of the ſpecie, which is, to compare the produce of that profit with the general ſum of exports.

THIS principle I have juſt eſtabliſhed, muſt lead to the knowledge of another truth:

truth: namely, that the ſame profit on the coinage of the ſpecie occaſions a different effect, according to the ſtate of the commerce of the nation. Let us ſuppoſe for example, the commercial exchanges of France, inſtead of amounting to three hundred millions of livres in exports, amount only to one hundred and fifty million, againſt two hundred and thirty millions of livres in imports, then the kingdom would gain the ſame balance of commerce; the importation of gold and ſilver would not be leſſened, and the coinage of theſe metals into ſpecie would equally yield to the ſovereign, a profit of ſix hundred thouſand livres; but as that ſum would fall only on an exportation of one hundred and fifty millions of livres, the indirect tax levied on that branch of the national trade would be two fifths per cent, and conſequently double what it is at preſent.

This hypotheſis which may be conſidered in various lights, ultimately gives an exact idea of the relative views, under which the profit made by the ſovereign on

the coinage of the ſpecie ought to be conſidered.

If after that, we enter on the actual ſtate of things, we ſhall undoubtedly find that a duty of one-fifth per cent on the exports of the kingdom levied in an imperceptible manner, cannot be any ways prejudicial to the commerce of France; and the ſtate being under the neceſſity of raiſing a conſiderable revenue, this moderate profit on the coinage of the ſpecie ought not to be refuſed: it were to be wiſhed, that the other taxes did not produce greater inconveniencies.

This profit of the king on the coinage of the ſpecie, has moreover the advantage not to occaſion any expences; for the charges of coinage would ſtill be the ſame, whatever price might be given for the metals that are to be coined into ſpecie.

I must make another obſervation: the profit of the ſovereign on the coinage of the ſpecie, proceeds, as it has been ſeen, from

from the price at which he thinks proper to purchaſe gold and ſilver; and the ſame rate has an influence in commerce, on the price of theſe metals; in ſo much, that if the king was to give up his profit, and conſequently pay one and a quarter per cent more for the gold and ſilver carried to the mints, he would raiſe in the ſame proportion, the price of that part of theſe metals, neceſſary for the jewellers, goldſmiths, gold and ſilver lace makers, and rich ſtuff manufacturers; and thereby create impediments to their trade with foreign parts: thus if the intereſt alone of theſe manufacturers was to be conſulted, it would be very proper farther to leſſen the price of gold and ſilver at the mints; but, in a ſound adminiſtration, no peculiar branch of commerce ought to be favoured by an arrangement prejudicial to other intereſts; and beſides, the ſovereign has every means in his power, to encourage any particular branch of commerce without inconvenience, whenever he ſhall think proper.

THE profit of the ſovereign on the coinage of the ſpecie, confined as it is at preſent within reaſonable limits cannot produce any injurious conſequence; but that very profit being, as I explained it, a burden impoſed on the exports of the kingdom, would, if raiſed too high, be oppoſed to ſound policy, that dictates the exempting from any duty the greateſt part of theſe exports.

Thus it is, that in affairs of adminiſtration, we ought always to avoid running into extremes: there are, undoubtedly ſome abſolutely fixed principles, but every inſtant preſents us with circumſtances in which they muſt be conciliated with each other. It requires great diſcernment in adminiſtration, to aſcertain their reſpective limits; it ſtands in need of that reſolution moſt difficult of any to be attained, namely, not to paſs certain bounds, and to ſtop ſeaſonably; and it muſt look on the tranquillity experienced by thoſe who govern, when they reſolve on giving themſelves up to the convenience of general ideas, as a forbidden pleaſure.

ANOTHER conſideration ſhould alſo divert the Sovereign from making an exaggerated profit on the coinage of the ſpecie: which is, that by purchaſing gold and ſilver at a price too inferior to the value theſe metals will acquire the inſtant they are converted into ſpecie, greater temptations would be offered to coiners of falſe money. Undoubtedly they may indugle their cupidity, by ſeveral methods, the moſt lucrative of which conſiſts in adulterating the ſtandard and the weight of the coins they fabricate; but this kind of fraud may be eaſily found out: whilſt on the other hand, by gaining only the value of the difference that exiſts between the price of gold and ſilver, as merchandiſe and ſtandard money, the above mentioned ſpeculation would be much leſs encouraged.

I COULD wiſh to have done with the ſubject of this chapter; for diſcuſſions ſuch as theſe are ſo abſtract and tranſitory that it is difficult to render them ſufficiently intereſting to indemnify the reader for the attention they require; but I cannot forbear throwing ſome light upon a doubtful point

which is both important and connected with the ſame object.

I HAVE ſhewn that a moderate profit made by the Sovereign, on the coinage of the ſpecie, could not put a ſtop to the annual importation of gold and ſilver, becauſe that importation is founded on the neceſſity, which foreigners are under to pay by that medium what they owe to France: it has however been remarked, that whenever the price of gold and ſilver was raiſed at the mints, either in favour of the public in general, or for the emolument of a few privileged perſons, the coinage of the ſpecie was momentaneouſly increaſed; and as this circumſtance was the baſis on which they founded the argument, that the giving up the King's profit on the coinage was an efficacious means to attract at all times, a greater quantity of gold and ſilver into the kingdom, it is of conſequence to demonſtrate the falſity of that concluſion.

GOLD and ſilver are never ſent to France, nor to any other country; but after every other means to pay with greater oeconomy has

has been attempted: thus the debtors to France begin by negotiating with the crediors of that kingdom, in order to obtain from them aſſignments or bills of exchange, by virtue of which the neceſſary funds may be acquitted in France. Theſe exchanges made between the debtors and creditors of a country are not made collectively, becauſe theſe debts and credits are not reciprocally balanced; but theſe tranſactions take place between individuals, and are extended to every trading town in Europe: they are attained by a multiplicity of combinations, and they are what is properly called *the buſineſs of exchanges*. But theſe negotiations, theſe exchanges and counter exchange are calculated finally to pay what is due with the greateſt poſſible oeconomy; therefore each tranſactor, and every perſon concerned in this general market of bills of exchange, has one point of compariſon conſtantly in view, and that is the rate at which funds may be bought in all great commercial towns, by ſending thither gold and ſilver bullion, and by converting theſe metals into current ſpecie, under the conditions ſettled by the government of the country.

LET us now ſuppoſe that, in this general ſtruggle between the debtors and creditors of France, and in the midſt of the complicated multiplicity of negotiations in which each merchant in Europe is concerned, the Sovereign was at once to raiſe the price of gold and ſilver in his kingdom, by changing the rate at which theſe metals are purchaſed at the ſeveral mints; then a part, either of the debtors of France, or of the ſpeculators, who are the agents between them and the creditors of that kingdom, would be eager to take advantage of the variation that ſhould happen in the price of theſe metals; and the balance due to France by foreigners would in that caſe, be really paid in gold and ſilver, faſter than it is uſually done. This acceleration which can take place only once, is of very little importance; in fact, what are ten or fifteen millions of livres in ſpecie, thrown into the circulation of the kingdom a little ſooner than common, when compared to two thouſand millions of livres, (about eighty-three millions ſterling) which are diſperſed through the kingdom? It is therefore a great error to look on ſuch an acceleration as a

real

real advantage; and to make permanent ſacrifices for the ſake of a momentary profit. In general, one cannot be too much on one's guard, in the adminiſtration of finances, not to confound appearances with truth, which is eaſily done: a very ſuperficial attention is ſufficient to catch at probabilities; they advance, as it were, to meet our thoughts: truths, on the contrary, ſeem as if they lagged behind; and can only be diſcovered by ſtudy and reflection.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

ON THE CESSION BY THE SOVEREIGN OF HIS PROFIT ON THE COINAGE OF THE SPECIE, TO INDIVIDUALS.

SUCH queſtions can ſcarcely be diſcuſſed in any other country but France; and we muſt apologize for our doing it, by ſaying, that this ceſſion of the profit made by the king on the coinage of the ſpecie is continually ſolicited; and that it had taken place, either in the whole, or with ſome modifications, during the greateſt part of twenty years, preceding my adminiſtration.

CONSIDERABLE bankers and other individuals availing themſelves of their credit, and of the ignorance of the miniſters of the finances,

finances, obtained what they desired by holding nearly this language;

" MONEY is scarce at Paris; because the " quantity of circulating specie, is not " sufficient in the kingdom: it is not suf- " ficient, because there is not a sufficient " coinage of new money; the coinage is " deficient, because a sufficient quantity of " gold and silver is not imported from " foreign parts; the importation is not " sufficient, because the Sovereign makes a " profit of one, or two per cent, on that " part of these metals which is carried to the " mints; therefore the interest of the " state requires that the King should give " up that profit; but secrecy, great abilities, " and great connexions with foreigners, " are necessary to attain the end proposed: " our zeal leads us to invite the prudent, " able, incomparable minister of the fi- " nances, to change in our favour only, " the price of gold and silver; being thus " encouraged, we shall even sacrifice a " part of our interests when necessary, and " we bind ourselves to pour into the mints " a quantity of gold and silver superior by,

" at

" at leaſt, ten millions of livres, to what
" was carried there during the courſe of
" the preceding year."

THE miniſter convinced by theſe reaſonings, ſtruck with this language, and already influenced by a ſentiment of good will towards them, agrees to the requiſition ; and thoſe who are gratified in this manner, with a branch of the ſovereign's revenue, are ſo much the more certain to be able to fulfil their engagements, as theſe promiſes are generally made on the eve of ſome event whoſe natural effect is, to increaſe the importation of gold and ſilver into the kingdom ; ſuch are, for example, the arrival of regiſter ſhips ; peace, and an increaſe of commerce, which is its conſequence : a great loan in which foreigners will take a ſhare ; and other circumſtances of the ſame nature. Laſtly, and I explained the reaſon of it in the preceding chapter, each ſudden increaſe in the price of gold and ſilver, at the mints, muſt accelerate inſtantaneouſly, the payment of the balance of commerce due by foreigners ; and the conſequence of this augmentation

is

is nearly the ſame, whether commerce in general be benefited by it, or that advantage be only yielded to individuals, who give a certain ſhare of it to the exchange brokers.

In the mean time, thoſe who are favoured in that manner by government will not fail to produce the mint regiſters at the end of the year; and as the ſtatements contained in them, will, from the above-mentioned reaſons, amount higher than thoſe of the preceding year, they will eaſily obtain a new leaſe from government, and even ſometimes other proofs of its gratitude.

It is nevertheleſs evident, that in a country where there are two thouſand millions of livres in circulation, one ſhould not be eaſily led to believe that ſpecie is ſcarce. A tranſitory abatement in the circulation may be owing to a multiplicity of different circumſtances; many of them are occaſioned by the errors of adminiſtration; and the miniſter's ſelf-love is flattered, when he is told that

that ſcarcity of money is the cauſe of every unlucky event.

FRANCE imports, and will always import a quantity of gold and ſilver proportionate to the extent of the debt due by other nations; and as the art of the moſt ſkilful banker cannot augment that importation, commerce in general ſhould be benefited by this dereliction of the Sovereign's profit on the coinage of the ſpecie, when is is reſolved upon; and the grant of ſuch an advantage to a few favoured individuals, may be ranked among the claſs of reprehenſible prodigalities.

SUCH are undoubtedly, the principles that ought to guide adminiſtration; and I ſhall add, that in every ſtate where the ſeat of government is ſituated in an inland city, and where, for want of experience, commercial ideas are not well known, the moſt ſimple maxims on that ſubject ought to be prefered, and exceptions never hearkened to. There is, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, ſo much affinity between moſt ſubjects of political oeconomy, that neither

neither the adminiſtration at Paris, nor that at Verſailles, poſſeſs a ſufficient fund of knowledge on ſuch matters, nor are they ſo well ſeconded by general informations, as to be able to parry the inſiduous reaſonings that ſelf-intereſt never fails to make uſe of.

CHAP. VI.

ON ALTERATIONS IN THE STANDARD, WEIGHT, AND NUMERARY VALUE OF THE SPECIE.

IF at the time of a general new coinage of the current ſpecie, their weight was either increaſed or diminiſhed, or their ſtandard either bettered, or lowered, that operation would not produce any real evil, provided the numerary value of the coins was to be increaſed or diminiſhed in an equivalent proportion; but as neither the Sovereign nor any other perſon would be benefited by that alteration, it is not likely that it ſhould ever be adviſed; eſpecially, as it would occaſion a great deal of trouble and give birth to ſuſpicion and diffidence without any utility whatever.

THE

THE operations on the ſpecie, which I mean to diſcuſs are of a quite different nature. Government miſled by deceitful appearances, and diſconcerted by the diſorder of public affairs, has often had recourſe to dangerous means, and blindly confiding in ſyſtems of which the inventors themſelves had only an imperfect and confuſed notion, it has ſometimes changed the intrinſic value of the ſpecie, without reducing the numerary value in proportion, and ſometimes raiſed that numerary value, without making any alteration in the intrinſic value. Theſe two operations are entirely ſimilar, both in their motives and their conſequences; and as ſuch plans are ſtill propoſed on every occaſion, when the finances are embarraſſed, I think it muſt be uſeful to point out their danger and fatal effects.

WHEN a ſovereign gives to the circulating ſpecie of his kingdom an additional value entirely ideal, he takes this determination only, in the view of paying his creditors with a leſs quantity of gold and ſilver; but as he not only owes them a certain numer-

al quantity of the coins current in his kingdom, but has alſo contracted an implicit engagement to acquit the debt in ſpecie equally good as heretofore, he is guilty of an evident injuſtice, when he breaks through that engagement.

Let us now ſuppoſe, that the intereſt, or the capitals of the creditors of a country, are paid in ſpecie, whereof the numerary value has been doubled, without any alteration whatever in its weight, or ſtandard; from that moment, theſe creditors find their fortunes reduced one half, becauſe the price of every thing will increaſe in a ſimilar proportion to the riſe of the numerary value of the ſpecie, in fact, the price of things bears no relation to the denomination of coins, or to their diviſion into a greater or leſs number of ſmaller coins: that price is wholly adapted to their intrinſic value; and if we do not hear theſe words conſtantly repeated in every bargain; "I ſell my time, my labour, my merchandiſe for ſuch and ſuch coins, containing ſuch and ſuch a quantity of pure gold and ſilver," it is becauſe every one being accuſtomed to look

look on the numerary value, as abſolutely combined with the intrinſic value, they neglect to recall to mind an idea which is nevertheleſs taken for granted.

THUS though the ſovereign may give to his coins, whatever denomination he pleaſes; though he may raiſe or lower their numerary value; though he may make an alteration in the quantity of gold and ſilver to be employed in their compoſition, by making new regulations for that purpoſe; though, in ſhort, he may completely alter each meaſure and weight employed in the market; he cannot ſubdue that opinion which decides, ſolely from a certain knowledge of their reſpective value, on the weight quantity, or meaſure of any commodity to be given in exchange for a piece of gold and ſilver of ſuch and ſuch a weight and ſtandard.

THE numerary value of coins is to their intrinſic value, what words are to ideas; and as the price of a coloured ſtone could not be raiſed, though it was denominated a ruby, or anemerald, by the king's ordinance; in the ſame manner, the effective value of a louis-

d'or, or of a crown-piece cannot be increaſed, by a mere alteration of the numerary denomination of theſe coins.

And yet, the damage which the creditors of the ſtate would experience would not be the only inconvenience that ſhould proceed from the operation, the effects of which are now under our conſideration. The ſovereign would alſo have other matters to reproach himſelf with : for by this alteration in the numerary value of the ſpecie, without changing its intrinſic value, and by paying his debts in this manner, he would authorize each debtor to act the ſame part by his creditors, and the unfaithfulneſs of the Sovereign would ſerve as a precedent for that of one half of the inhabitants of his kingdom towards the other half. What diſtractions, what a chain of injuſtice and of breach of faith would be ſeen! and the protector of public ſecurity would be the firſt author of ſuch a confuſion ! Its conſequences would not even be circumſcribed within the limits of the kingdom ; thoſe foreigners who trade with France would be involved in it, ſome would gain, others would loſe by this general confuſion.

Thoſe

Thoſe who at the time of the variation of the ſpecie ſhould be debtors to France in French money, would pay their debt with a much leſs conſiderable proportion of gold and ſilver, whilſt thoſe, on the contrary, on whoſe account merchandizes ſhould have been ſold on credit, would receive only a part of what ſhould be due to them.

Who would not think at leaſt, that ſo many calamities were produced in order to enrich the royal exchequer? That was undoubtedly in view, but the combinations proved deceitful. The Sovereign diminiſhes, indeed, his debts by half, when he takes the liberty to acquit them in money whereof he has doubled the numerary value, without changing its intrinſic value: but as all his other expences are relative either to his houſhold, his navy, his land-forces, or his wants from foreign parts, and as theſe expences repreſent a value received and given without compulſion, either in labour or in commodities, that contract of exchange between the Sovereign and his ſubjects cannot exiſt any longer on the ſame conditions, from the inſtant the numerary value of the

coins is altered. Then, the ſovereign will be obliged to increaſe the pay, the ſalaries, the emoluments, and the numerical quantity of ſpecie demandable for each article of ſupply; and he will not be able to make any profit on the moſt conſiderable part of his expences.

THIS is not all; another important diſtinction is to be made: the taxes which compoſe the ſovereign's revenue, conſiſt of two ſorts: ſome are an impoſition of ſo much per cent, on the value of the natural produce, or of merchandizes, and others are rated at a poſitive quantity of money.

THE numerical produce of the taxes proportioned to the value of things; would undoubtedly riſe in the ratio of the increaſe (occaſioned by this alteration in the currency of the coins) in the price of every kind of property; and the ſovereign would neither gain nor loſe any thing on this part of his income.

THIS would not be the caſe with the other taxes; thus, rents, the determined poll-tax, compoſitions of every kind, the profit reſulting from the excluſive ſale of ſalt and tobacco, at a fixed price, the rate of poſtage, in ſhort, the various duties that are not impoſed in proportion to the value of the produce, or of the commodities; all that important part of the king's revenue would experience a conſiderable diminution, and the reaſon of it is very plain.

As long as a louis d'or, of ſuch weight and ſtandard as they are now at, repreſents twenty-four livres, a poll-tax of ſeven hundred and twenty livres can only be acquitted with thirty louis d'ors, weighing eight ounces: but from the moment when by an edict of the ſovereign, the louis d'or is declared to be worth forty-eight livres, fifteen louis d'ors, weighing four ounces will be ſufficient to diſcharge the ſame poll-tax.

UNDOUBTEDLY, the ſovereign might, at the ſame time, under the view of really pro-

profiting by his operation, double all the taxes that are paid in a determined quantity of livres; he might alſo raiſe the price of ſalt and tobacco; he might generally reviſe every tax, and modify thoſe whoſe conſtitution might thwart his views. But then, the injuſtice of government towards the creditors of the ſtate would appear in its full extent; and it would fail of attaining the end propoſed: for it is always in order to diſguiſe that injuſtice, that recourſe is had to theſe operations on the coins: government flatters itſelf with the hopes of being able to conceal the deſign; it expects to deceive the judgment of the public, by the help of theſe complicated combinations, the dangerous conſequences of which do not appear all at once. Thus, in order to delay the complaints of the nation, or to render them uncertain for a ſhort time, it is not afraid to excite a general confuſion, by deſtroying every connection that ſerves as a baſis to ſocial compacts.

Such a policy does not become a great monarch; nor does it correſpond with his dignity

dignity. He muſt not add to the number of real evils, thoſe that ſpring from diſorder and confuſion, more eſpecially; he ought not himſelf to weaken every principle of morality, by giving the example of the moſt alarming kind of treachery, namely, that which appears to be the conſequence of reflection. Alas! it is in adverſe times that the ſtate ſtands moſt in need of all the virtues of its ſovereign; and far from adviſing him in ſuch moments to any deceitful operation, he ought to be diverted from it, by ſhewing him that evaſions and diſguiſes ſucceed ſtill leſs in adminiſtration than in politics, becauſe it is on a theatre open to every one, that they muſt be employed, and it is difficult to deceive, when the eyes of a whole nation are fixed on him. But it is more eſpecially by generous ſentiments, that the hearts of ſovereigns ought to be guided to what is great and honeſt, and inſtead of timorouſly pointing out little means, inſtead of putting in their hands thoſe arms which only ſuit the weak againſt the powerful, their courage ought to be elevated, and they ſhould be excited to adopt a line

a line of acting worthy the greatneſs and majeſty of the chiefs of ſtates. Therefore, even in the moſt deſperate ſituation of the finances, the miniſter muſt venture to lay open the ſtate of affairs, he muſt, by ſhewing himſelf affected with it, point out the diverſe means which the circumſtances of the times force him to have recourſe to; he muſt demonſtrate that thoſe he adopts are the leaſt diſtreſſing; he ought, as it were, to aſſociate the nation in his deliberations, and make it witneſs the difficulties that are to be conquered. At what time is it leſs juſtiable to deceive it, than when it is indiſpenſable to impoſe additional burdens?

Is there a moment when it is more neceſſary to gain its confidence, than when in order to ſoften the preſent, he ought to diſperſe all anxieties about the future? Is there a moment when the ſovereign ought more to ſhew himſelf to be an honeſt man, than when every hope and comfort are concentered in the idea adopted of his character, and of the principles of his government?

No

No, he never muſt make uſe of any deceitful art; in proſperous days, it is uſeleſs; and in thoſe of adverſity, he may ſoften, calm, and ſave every thing by a ſincere, ſimple and open line of acting: it has this great advantage, among ſeveral others, that from the beginning, the intereſt of the ſovereign becomes the intereſt of the nation, and that it gives him the command of thoſe reſources that flow from the love of his ſubjects, and from the confidence of thoſe whom he was ſolicitous to enlighten. O power of frankneſs and truth, too little known! thou art of more value to ſovereigns, than all the ſubtleties of cunning and diſſimulation; but ſuch is the greatneſs and majeſty of pure and ſimple ideas, that kings ſcarcely ever attain them, either by the advice, or indication of their ſervants and miniſters, and they are obliged to elevate themſelves to them, by the concioufneſs of what they are, and what they ought to be.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

ON THE EXPORTATION AND MELTING OF THE NATIONAL SPECIE.

THE exportation of the national ſpecie, is prohibited in France; but this prohibition could never be maintained; and when there was an advantage to be gained by the exportation of the ſpecie, it was ſometimes allowed, ſometimes tolerated, ſometimes done by ſtealth. But excepting thoſe times in which France ſupported great armies out of the kingdom, there have been but few occaſions when that exportation has been neceſſary: and when thoſe various circumſtances changed, it was not long before the ſpecie returned home again.

THE

THE exportation of the ſpecie was formerly looked on in a much more ſerious light than at preſent; but that was occaſioned by a ſort of ignorance which is a little removed.

IT is high time to acknowledge that government cannot have any other influence to retain in the kingdom, or to augment the ſpecie, than by contributing, with all its force, to the profit of national commerce; which profit conſiſts in ſelling more to foreigners, than is purchaſed of them.

BESIDES, it is ſufficient to take a view of the ſtatements of coinage at the different mints, not to be anxious about the abundance of ſpecie in France, and when it ſometimes happens, that by the combinations of exchange, or in conſequence of the price of gold and ſilver in other countries, there is a profit in exporting ſpecie from France, it muſt not be minded; and it ought to be conſidered that raiſing obſtacles to this method of ſending money to foreign parts, when it is the

the moſt oeconomical, ſerves no other end than to oblige ſpeculators to contrive for the time, ſome indirect channel of remittance more burdenſome to the kingdom.

No care of adminiſtration, however, could hinder the exportation of the ſpecie, if any reſolution fatal to the commerce of France was to render this kingdom annually debtor to other nations: but as long as it remains their creditor, and that for a conſiderable ſum, it is but of little moment, that fortuitous circumſtances occaſion the going out of louis d'ors, or ſix livres pieces; theſe coins will undoubtedly be the firſt that will be ſent back, from foreign parts. But it is not to be feared, that they will be immediately melted, and that this part of the circulating ſpecie will by that means be annihilated? It may happen; but nothing can be more indifferent: for as long as the yearly balance of commerce ſhall be in favour of the kingdom, the greater the quantity of louis d'ors and ſix livres pieces that have been melted, the greater will be the amount, which it will be in-

dif-

diſpenſably neceſſary to remit either in dollars, in Portugal coins, in ducats, or in bullion: and with theſe materials, other louis d'ors and ſix livres pieces will be coined, the workmen at the mints will have a conſequent ſalary, and the ſovereign's revenue will be increaſed.

THE melting of the circulating ſpecie is alſo forbidden in France; and delinquents are puniſhed by being ſent to the gallies.

THIS law, founded on ignorance, was renewed and confirmed two years ago; it is therefore of no ſmall conſequence to endeavour to elucidate this queſtion.

THE melting of the national ſpecie is looked on in France, in a ſtill more ſerious light than its exportation, but both theſe opinions are equally erroneous.

WE have ſeen that thirty louis d'ors, worth ſeven hundred and twenty livres, weigh a mark or eight ounces; and that forty-nine livres ſixteen ſous in ſilver coin give the ſame weight. Goldſmiths can-

not therefore find any advantage in melting new louis d'ors and ſix livres pieces, unleſs when eight ounces of gold at the ſtandard of the louis d'ors, are worth more than ſeven hundred and twenty livres, and when eight ounces of ſilver at the ſtandard of ſix livres pieces, are worth above forty-nine livres ſixteen ſous, now it will eaſily be conceived how ſeldom ſuch times have occurred, as ſince 1726, each ſucceeding year has ſeen the mints provided by merchants with a conſiderable ſum of gold and ſilver, paid for at a price very much under that abovementioned, and conformable to the diverſe rates I have mentioned.

But if in the courſe of the year, there are times in which the price of gold and ſilver is ſo high that it may be profitable to melt louis d'ors, or ſix livre pieces, it is not the intereſt of the ſovereign to forbid it; it is, on the contrary, the ſure means to prevent this tranſient riſe from running too high; whereas, if goldſmiths and jewellers are forced to purchaſe, at any rate whatever, the gold and ſilver coming from foreign parts, their works are thereby

thereby raiſed in price, and that branch of commerce is injured.

Besides, if goldſmiths and jewellers melt louis d'ors, and ſix livre pieces for the exigences of their trade, the quantity of ſpecie will nevertheleſs be the ſame in a ſtated time; for theſe manufacturers will purchaſe ſo much the leſs gold and ſilver coming from foreign parts; and as a ſum equivalent to the balance of commerce muſt neceſſarily be annually imported into France, ſo much of that quantity as ſhall not be employed by goldſmiths and jewellers, will ſerve to increaſe the quantity of gold and ſilver carried to, and purchaſed at the mints.

It cannot but be uſeful to ſtate the ſame ideas under various forms, when a queſtion both abſtruſe and important is under diſcuſſion. I ſhall therefore reſume in the following manner what I have ſaid on the above ſubject.

Let us ſuppoſe, there is a yearly importation of bullion into France, to the

amount of fifty millions of gold and ſilver, and that this ſum is the indiſpenſable payment of the balance of the commercial intercourſe between that kingdom and other nations.

LET us alſo ſuppoſe that of theſe fifty millions, ten are uſually purchaſed by goldſmiths, jewellers, gold and ſilver lace manufacturers, &c. for the demands of their trade.

THERE will remain forty millions which, muſt neceſſarily be carried to the mints, and that quantity will be the real increaſe of the ſpecie.

Now, let us admit of another hypotheſis, and ſuppoſe that by an extraordinary fluctuation in the courſe of exchange, and in the price of theſe precious metals, goldſmiths and jewellers have found a temporary advantage in melting louis d'ors, and ſix livre pieces, and that it has been done in one year to the value of five millions of livres: undoubtedly, they have purchaſed ſo much the leſs of the gold and ſilver

ver brought from foreign parts, and as according to our hypotheſis, the importation of theſe metals is fixed at fifty millions of livres, by the irreſiſtible power of the balance of commerce; if the purchaſes made by theſe manufacturers amounts to only five millions, in the courſe of one year, then forty-five millions inſtead of forty, will be carried to the mints; and if the augmentation of the ſpecie is eſtimated, on that unavoidable footing, it will be found that the value of five millions of coin has been melted, and that the coinage of new money has been carried up to the ſum of forty-five millions; it ſhould therefore follow, from this ſecond hypotheſis, as well as from the firſt, that the augmentation of the ſpecie will ſtill be forty millions.

Thus, though we find it difficult to perſuade ourſelves that the ſum total of the ſpecie is not leſſened, when it is known that it is melted in the crucible, yet if the conſequences of that melting of the ſpecie is carefully attended to, during the ſpace of one or two years, the truth of

the propoſition I have advanced will no longer be conteſted. As this truth, however, can only be made evident by the help of an argument that muſt be attended to, we cannot doubt, but it would meet with a great oppoſition, and be generally condemned, if it was propoſed to authoriſe by law, the melting down of the national ſpecie, but it is not the leſs important to enlighten adminiſtration, that ſuch an unreaſonable regulation as the prohibition may loſe a little of its force by diſuſe, and that by watching narrowly, the fluctuation of public opinion, a proper moment may be pitched on, to root up entirely theſe remains of old eſtabliſhed ignorance.

I AM well aware, that it is not an eaſy matter to catch the workmen in the fact of melting the ſpecie; for in order to attain that diſcovery, it would be neceſſary to place inſpectors in every ſhop; but there is nevertheleſs a great inconvenience in the promulgation of laws contrary to private intereſt, without neceſſity, more eſpecially when they may ſo eaſily be infringed

fringed by ſtealth; for thus it is, that men are brought by degrees, to make light of the dictates of their conſcience. It is ſufficient to require many ſelf-denials from them in favour of what is really uſeful to the ſtate; without having their obligations and ſubjections multiplied by the errors of adminiſtration: neither ought the reſpect due to the will of the ſovereign to be weakened, by a prohibition of that which cannot be hindered; and the citizens muſt not be expoſed to a continual inquiſition, by appointing a ſevere puniſhment for crimes that can never be proved, and may always be ſuſpected.

It is thus, however, by ſtudying cloſely the various branches of political oeconomy, we diſcover that even in ſubjects the leaſt known and the leaſt thought of, there exiſts an intimate connection between thoſe principles that ought to ſerve as a rule to adminiſtration, and the ideas of ſound morality: this connection enhances the value of diſquiſitions; and renders them intereſting above all, to thoſe well-

wiſhers of mankind, who are delighted with finding every where, veſtiges of that order and concatenation, the perfect comprehenſion of which renders the art of governing a moſt noble and elegant ſcience.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

ON THE QUANTITY OF SPECIE IN FRANCE.

BY what means can we attain the knowledge of the quantity of ſpecie circulating in a country? that queſtion is the firſt that occurs when we reflect on the ſubject I am now going to diſcuſs. Undoubtedly, ſuch a knowledge is not to be attained, either by the declaration of thoſe who are poſſeſſors of that ſpecie, or by any kind of inquiry, or inquiſition. Who would own the truth on that point? and what government would be ſo weak as to aſk ſuch queſtions? and even ſuppoſing it was, it muſt have the faculty of putting it at the ſame inſtant, to each inhabitant of

of the kingdom, becauſe money changes its proprietors every hour.

THERE is therefore, but one ſingle method of forming an idea of the quantity of ſpecie circulating in France; and as in the inquiries after the ſtate of population, the number of births, deaths, and emigrations is calculated, ſo, in the ſame manner, to form an opinion on the quantity of gold and ſilver ſpecie circulating in the kingdom, it is neceſſary in the firſt place to aſcertain the quantity coined; and afterwards to examine what part of that quantity may be loſt, either by accidental melting, by ſhip-wreck, or by exportation to foreign parts. That which was, and that which is no more; theſe are the two objects which it is important to know and to eſtimate, in order to form an idea of the truth.

THE firſt of theſe notions is the eaſieſt to acquire, becauſe the exacteſt account is kept at the mints, of the quantity of coin annually fabricated there.

THE

THE moſt ancient gold and ſilver coins now circulating in France, are of the year 1726 : all the antecedent ſpecie fell into diſcredit at that epocha, and was called in, and a general recoinage took place. Now from that time to the end of 1780, the coinage at the different mints of the kingdom amounted to nine hundred and fifty-ſeven millions, two hundred thouſand livres in gold; and to one thouſand four hundred and eighty-nine millions, five hundred thouſand livres in ſilver.

IN the whole, two thouſand four hundred and forty-ſix millions, ſeven hundred thouſand livres.

THUS, if we ſuppoſe that during 1781, 1782, and 1783, the annual coinage amounted to fifty-two millions three hundred thouſand livres (and it certainly was much greater) the total ſum coined from 1726 to the firſt of January 1784, would riſe to two thouſand five hundred millions of livres.

THESE facts are not uncertain ; it would be very difficult for the directors of the mints

mints to deceive, on account of the precautions taken, and it was ſcarely ever ſuſpected. But even ſuppoſing there was any falſehood in their accounts, it would not be to augment in appearance, the quantity coined, but rather to leſſen it, that is to ſay, to repreſent it as being leſs than it really is, in order ſecretly to appropriate to themſelves the profit that reſults from the coinage.

HAVING thus made known the quantity of gold and ſilver ſpecies coined ſince the time it was generally called in and melted, we have now to inquire what part of that ſpecie has been loſt by ſome means or other. Undoubtedly this information is the moſt difficult to obtain, and conjecture alone can bring us nearly to the truth.

I HAVE already demonſtrated, that a very ſmall quantity of the circulating ſpecie has been melted in France, becauſe, ſince 1726 the directors of the mints have yearly purchaſed an immenſe quantity of gold and ſilver, at a rate much inferior to the price

price that might be an inducement to melt the national ſpecie.*

No conſiderable ſum in ſpecie can have been loſt by ſhipwrecks, as the occaſional exportation to other countries of Europe has almoſt always been by land-carriage, and the remittances of gold and ſilver to the French colonies, principally conſiſt in dollars, or Portugueſe money.

* THIS reaſoning would not, however, be quite ſo juſt, if the almoſt ridiculous transfactions of 1782 and 1783, were often to be renewed.

THE adminiſtration of the finances, hearing of nothing elſe but the pretended ſcarcity of the ſpecie, had reſolved to introduce into the kingdom a greater quantity of gold and ſilver than the proportion of the debts due on account of trade, or the natural courſe of things would admit; and in conſequence, either through the mediation of the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*, or that of ſome bankers, government had purchaſed gold and ſilver at ſo high a price; that there was an evident profit to be made by melting down louis d'ors and ſix livre pieces, or by exporting them to foreign parts; but ſuch ſpeculations on the part of adminiſtrations, are fortunately too rare, to make any remarkable exception to the general principles we have juſt eſtabliſhed.

THERE

THERE remains therefore, to examine, as the only article that really deſerves attention, what part of the circulating ſpecie, after being exported to foreign parts, has not again found its way into the kingdom: we cannot indeed know this very preciſely, ſince the exportation of gold and ſilver is not ſubjected to be declared at the cuſtom-houſes: but reaſoning, in this caſe, may ſupply the want of poſitive information.

THE balance of commerce having been always favourable to France, the national ſpecie was only exported in thoſe years when the ſovereign maintained conſiderable armies in Germany and Italy; it is alſo poſſible, that ſmall quantities may have been exported, when a tranſitory revolution in the courſe of exchange and in the price of gold and ſilver, has given a temporary opening to that kind of ſpeculation: but the ſpecie thus exported, whatever might have been the motive, muſt have been reimported into the kingdom, and I ſhall here endeavour to demonſtrate this aſſertion.

It will eaſily be conceived, that there is no occaſion, in ordinary times to export the national ſpecie from France, if it is conſidered that this kingdom being continually the creditor of other nations, there has been imported annually, a large quantity of gold and ſilver, which has been coined at the mints into current money.

Now, it ſhould be recollected, that when I treated of the coinage of the ſpecie, I ſhewed that the reſult of that operation was, for individuals to receive inſtead of eight ounces of gold or ſilver at the ſtandard of French money, a certain weight in louis d'ors, or ſix livre pieces, leſs than that for which the firſt is exchanged; and it neceſſarily follows, that if foreigners had habitually exported French money, and ſent into the kingdom the ſame amount in gold and ſilver in bars and ingots, they would have loſt a great deal by ſuch a commerce; for French money in foreign countries, is only worth its weight and ſtandard, and it is in France only, that it is current for the additional value which the authority

thority and the ſtamp of the ſovereign gives it.

For all theſe reaſons therefore, it will be a juſt propoſition to maintain, that it would be an event as uncommon in trade, to import into France gold and ſilver, in bullion or in foreign coins, and at the ſame time to export a like quantity of the national ſpecie, as it would be to exchange one hundred yards of broad cloth for ninety-ſix, or ninety-eight yards of the very ſame quality.

This is not all: the ſame reflections lead us to take notice, that when either accidentally, or during the courſe of a war which obliges government to maintain numerous French armies in foreign countries, the national ſpecie is ſent out of the kingdom, that ſame ſpecie muſt neceſſarily be ſucceſſively reimported, when the extraordinary circumſtances that occaſioned the exportation, no longer ſubſiſt. In fact, as ſoon, after the concluſion of peace, as the balance of commerce has again acquired its ſuperiority, thoſe foreigners who

who are debtors to France, are highly intereſted to begin their payments by ſending back its ſpecie : it is much more advantageous for them to acquit their debts in that manner, than to remit gold and ſilver, or foreign money : for in order to have ready money in France for theſe metals, they are obliged to convert them into the national coin : which they cannot do without ſubjecting themſelves to the loſs occaſioned, both by the expences of coinage, and the ſovereign's profit. If, on the contrary, louis d'ors, and ſix livre pieces bought out of the kingdom, according to their weight and ſtandard, are ſent into France by foreigners, then they gain that peculiar value which the law aſſigns to each coin impreſſed with the ſovereign's ſtamp ; except it happens, that this circumſtance being known by thoſe who in foreign parts have French ſpecie to diſpoſe of, they make ſome little profit by it, and endeavour to keep up the price ſomewhat above the intrinſic value.

LASTLY, experience ſtrengthens this mode of reaſoning: for even in the very

firſt years of peace, after our German and Italian wars, French money was imported into the kingdom in great quantities.

And yet it is poſſible, that ſome of that money has been melted down in foreign countries, as it has ſometimes been the caſe in France for a ſhort ſpace of time: louis d'ors are alſo ſent to Geneva, to Swiſſerland, and more eſpecially to Italy, to purchaſe ſilks; and theſe are the countries of Europe, where they remain in the greateſt quantity, becauſe in ſome parts of theſe countries a fixed value, authoriſed by the ſovereign has been aſſigned to that money.

It is therefore reaſonable to allow that there has been a certain diminution of the circulating ſpecie, from 1726 untill the preſent time; and all I wiſhed to demonſtrate was, that it would be wrong to form an exaggerated idea of that diminution; and I believe it will be ſufficient to eſtimate it at three, or four hundred millions of livres.

Now

Now if that ſuppoſition is exact, the ſpecie at preſent circulating in the kingdom, will amount to nearly, two thouſand, two hundred millions of livres.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE PROGRESSIVE INCREASE OF THE CIRCULATING SPECIE IN FRANCE.

AS long as no circumſtance is perceptible, which may turn ſuddenly the balance of commerce againſt France, which is now in its favour, it is by precedent that we ought to form our conjectures, on the progreſſive increaſe of the circulating ſpecie. Let us therefore, direct our firſt inquiries accordingly.

DURING a ſpace of fifteen years, from the beginning of 1763, until the end of 1777, that is to ſay, during all the time of the laſt peace, the mints of France coined gold and ſilver to the amount of ſix hundred and ſeventy-five millions, five hundred thouſand livres in ſpecie.

LET us now ſuppoſe that ſeventy-five millions, five hundred thouſand livres of that ſum have been diſſipated, either by melting, or being diſperſed in foreign countries, there will remain ſix hundred million livres, for the real increaſe of the circulating ſpecie, during the above fifteen years, and that is forty millions of livres, on an average, for each year.

BY judging of the future from what is paſt, we may eſtimate the annual increaſe of the circulating ſpecie at the above ſum; and that ſum compared with the actual circulation of two thouſand, two hundred millions of livres, will give an annual increaſe of about *two per cent.*

THIS continual progreſſive augmentation of the circulating ſpecie, is an important ſubject for reflection: for therein is ſeen the motive of the advanced price of all commodities, of the natural augmentation of the produce of the taxes, of the proportionable increaſe of ſeveral public charges and laſtly, of the diminution of the real value of the fortunes of annuitants. In

fact, the produce of the earth and of induſtry, muſt riſe in price, in proportion as gold and ſilver become more abundant, and this conſequence of the increaſe of the ſpecie would be much more ſenſibly felt, if the prudence of ſovereigns, led by the conſideration of public order, did not ſet bounds, in various circumſtances to the ſpeculations upon corn, and thereby ſtop the natural progreſs in the price of that article; and as moſt retributions for labour are proportioned to the current price of commodities of indiſpenſable neceſſity, it happens that the general price of things does not augment in an exact *ratio* to the increaſe of the ſpecie.

It ought moreover to be obſerved, that though the preſent annual augmentation of the national ſpecie, is to the actual maſs of that ſpeeie, in the proportion of two, to one hundred, that proportion will gradually leſſen by length of time. In fact, if, in about twenty years, there ſhould be in France nearly three thouſand millions of livres, as it is probable there will, then the annual augmentation, ſuppoſing

poſing it is to be always of forty millions of livres, will be only in the ratio of one and a half per cent. on the general maſs; and that ratio will only be one per cent. fifty years hence, if the maſs of ſpecie is then double what it is at preſent: in ſhort, the more the general amount of the national ſpecie ſhall be increaſed, the leſs annual increaſe will be felt. I believe this obſervation deſerves the attention of thoſe who may be led to prognoſticate on the future conſequence of the progreſſive annual augmentation of the ſpecie.

I DO not know whether thoſe who may attend to this increaſe of the ſpecie in France, during the courſe of the preceding peace, will have the ſame curioſity as me, to diſcover the relation that exiſted between that increaſe in France and its augmentation in the reſt of Europe; but as this inquiry is of ſome importance, I ſhall venture to indicate my opinion on that ſubject.

PROBABLE notions may be formed on the quantity of gold and ſilver imported into Europe, during the courſe of the laſt peace.

AND we may, pretty nearly, aſcertain the quantity of theſe metals, ſent to the Eaſt Indies, to China, the Levant, and the coaſt of Barbary.

SUPPOSING therefore, that the total amount of gold and ſilver imported into Europe were known, and alſo the quantity exported, then the remainder will be known; and that quantity being aſcertained, if we can become acquainted with the part of it that France poſſeſſes, we ſhall neceſſarily judge of what belongs to the reſt of Europe.

LET us now explore theſe different principles.

IT appears from the regiſter books, that from 1763 untill 1777, Cadiz and Liſbon received to the amount of one thouſand

ſix

ſix hundred millions of livres in gold and ſilver ſent from the Weſt Indies.

To this principal ſum, we muſt add that quantity which was not regiſtered, but landed by ſtealth; and of which no perſon can have an exact knowledge: moreover, a ſmall quantity of gold duſt is yearly imported from the coaſt of Africa: laſtly, the produce of ſome ſilver mines ſcattered through Europe, alſo augment the ſum of theſe precious metals.

I SHALL therefore eſtimate theſe various ſums collectively, at between two and three hundred millions of livres.

THE imports of gold and ſilver during the fifteen years of the laſt peace amount therefore, to the ſum of one thouſand, eight hundred and fifty millions of livres.

BUT the whole of this capital has not remained in Europe: France alone, to pay for its purchaſes and to provide for the expences of adminiſtration in its poſſeſſions beyond the Cape of Good Hope, has ſent up-

upwards of one million of livres in dollars, to the Eaſt Indies, China and Mauritius, during the courſe of fifteen years, on which we eſtabliſh our calculation. Other nations have likewiſe ſent money to China for the exigences of their commerce; and the trade of Europeans with Turkey and the coaſts of Barbary, occaſions a moderate exportation of dollars, taleries and gold coin.

I CANNOT indicate with accuracy, the amount of the gold and ſilver which theſe different exigences have cauſed to be exported out of Europe; but I think I ſhall not deviate much from the truth, by eſtimating that export, at about three hundred millions of livres.

Now if we deduct that ſum from the one thouſand, eight hundred and fifty millions imported into Europe, we ſhall find the increaſe of theſe precious metals in this part of the world, to be one thouſand, five hundred and fifty millions of livres, during the ſpace of time included between 1763, and the end of 1777.

LET us now ſee what part of that immenſe treaſure France has had for her ſhare.

WE have already ſeen, that during that ſame ſpace of time, France has increaſed its circulating ſpecie ſix hundred million of livres; but we muſt alſo add to this capital ſum, the quantity of gold and ſilver that has been employed in the kingdom, both as an augmentation of national luxury in articles of rich and coſtly workmanſhip, and likewiſe to replace the quantities of theſe ſplendid effects, that are worn out, or diſſipated by length of time. It is very difficult to form an exact idea on this head: but from various informations I have on the ſubject, I do not think I ſhall be greatly deceived, if I eſtimate that conſumption of theſe precious metals at the yearly rate of ten millions of livres in times of peace: this eſtimation will give one hundred and fifty millions of livres for fifteen years. Thus from 1763, until the end of 1777, it ſhould appear, that the kingdom acquired ſeven hundred and fifty millions of livres

in

in gold and ſilver, the four fifths of which, have been employed to the real increaſe of its circulating ſpecie.

Now, as the ſum total of theſe metals accumulated in Europe during that ſpace of time, amounts to one thouſand, five hundred and fifty millions of livres, it follows that the ſhare of the other European nations muſt have been eight hundred millions of livres.

And as the quantity of gold and ſilver employed by theſe various nations collectively, in the augmentation and maintenance of their luxury, and in articles of coſtly workmanſhip, muſt naturally be greater than the quantity employed in France for that purpoſe, it is probable that out of this ſum of eight hundred millions of livres, which the nations of Europe, excluſive of France, have ſhared among them, ſix hundred millions only, have been appropriated to the augmentation of their circulating ſpecie.

THUS the increaſe of the circulating ſpecie in France, during a ſpace of fifteen years, would be equal to the increaſe of the circulating ſpecie of the other nations of Europe, during the ſame ſpace of time.

FROM the above probabilities, we ought not to infer that the general maſs of the circulating ſpecie in France bears an equal proportion to the general maſs of the ſpecie, circulating throughout the reſt of Europe: for in order to draw ſuch an inference, it would be requiſite that the diſtribution of gold and ſilver in Europe, ſhould have continually been in the ſame proportion, from the earlieſt period to the time above mentioned: and on that ſubject, it is impoſſible to make any calculations.

BUT, I ſhall only obſerve, that if the future diſtribution of theſe metals, was to be for any long ſpace of time, in the ſame ratio as we have prejudged it has been during the laſt peace, the difference which might have exiſted in the prior

prior diviſion of theſe metals, would become imperceptible.

As the ſubject which I have juſt treated was neceſſarily compoſed of ſeveral hypotheſis, I had ſome reluctance to enter upon it, but I was convinced it would be uſeful to communicate, at leaſt, the method which appeared to me, to be the moſt proper to facilitate the inveſtigation of an intereſting ſcience, and I am of opinion, that with reſpect to ſubjects that have never been before diſcuſſed, every connected idea affords ſome aſſiſtance towards approaching the truth.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

ON THE ADVANTAGES, OR INCONVENIENCES RESULTING FROM AN ABUNDANCE OF CIRCULATING SPECIE.

THE annual produce of gold and ſilver mines, and the importation of the precious metals into Europe, are the firſt ſources of the general increaſe of ſpecie; but the ſhare which each particular country appropriates to itſelf, depends on the balance of its commerce; and it is to render that balance more or leſs favourable, that nations eagerly contend with, and become rivals of each other. Where then is the great merit of that abundance, and of that

increaſe of ſpecie? Does public felicity, does the power of a ſtate depend on it?

THE extenſion of luxury, and the progreſs of avarice and cupidity, are what moraliſts impute to the augmentation of gold and ſilver; and, as at the ſame time, many people ſee nothing in this augmentation but an increaſe of embarraſſments, and an uſeleſs multiplication of the repreſentatives of barter, one might be tempted to miſtruſt that policy which lays ſo great a ſtreſs both on the acquiſition of theſe precious metals, and on the abundance of ſpecie, which is the laſt reſult of this kind of conqueſt.

LET us endeavour to throw ſome light on ſo intereſting a ſubject.

I SHALL obſerve in the firſt inſtance, that the general augmentation of gold and ſilver in Europe, or the annual increaſe of theſe metals in any particular country are the objects of two very different diſquiſitions: for though the productive mines of America were on a ſudden to ceaſe furniſh-

niſhing new treaſures, the deſire of obtaining a favourable balance of commerce, would nevertheleſs exiſt: the only difference would be, that inſtead of diſputing among themſelves for the greateſt ſhare in the diſtribution of the riches imported by the regiſter ſhips from the new world, the various nations would turn their ambition towards appropriating to themſelves by commerce, as much as they could of the circulating ſpecie of other nations, and the beſt policy would conſiſt in enriching themſelves with each other's ſpoils. This ambition common to all nations, is not a blind deſire; and I ſhall endeavour to render this truth perceptible, without making uſe of any abſtruſe reaſoning.

Let us ſuppoſe, that a country till then unknown to the reſt of the world, was diſcovered in another hemiſphere: let us alſo ſuppoſe, that we are told that this country is in its extent equal to the kingdom of France, is fertile, abounds in various productions, that numerous communications are opened therein, that property is prudently diſtributed, in ſhort, that the ſtate

has been governed by prudent laws from an early period; undoubtedly we ſhould not wonder if the cultivation and population of ſuch a country were arrived at the higheſt pitch, even though ten thouſand marks of ſilver were to compoſe all its circulating ſpecie: we ſhould eaſily conceive, that the ſcarcity of that metal has allowed a very great value to be ſet on a very trifling piece of money, and we ſhould not be ſurpriſed that ſuch a difference between the ſtandard and the real value, has not been any obſtacle to the proſperity of that empire.

Now, by another ſuppoſition, let us bring that unknown country, till then happy and flouriſhing, though with ſo ſmall a quantity of gold and ſilver, into the neighbourhood of our continent. It would be very ſoon involved in our political combinations, its neighbours would eſtimate its weakneſs, and endeavour to take advantage of it; they would be conſcious that this new ſtate, deprived of gold and ſilver, cannot for a long time to come, maintain troops out of its frontiers; their ſpeculations

ations would even be carried farther, and they would calculate, that in a country where the ſcarcity of the ſpecie keeps all the neceſſary articles of life at a very low price, it would be an eaſy matter with a very ſmall ſum of money, to accumulate proviſions, to eſtabliſh magazines, and if neceſſary to corrupt the generals, the ſoldiers, and the miniſters of ſtate; in a word, to join every other means of conqueſt, to military force. Then, the goverment in ſuch a ſtate would not be long before it became conſcious that in order to increaſe the power of the ſtate, it was of the greateſt importance that the ſpecie ſhould be augmented by commerce: it would no longer look on that kind of wealth, as the mere medium of barter, and to acquire a greater quantity of it, the ſovevereign would deſire that his ſubjects ſhould ſell a great deal of merchandiſe to other nations, and purchaſe very little from them: he would ſtudy the means to ſecond that plan by exportation and importation duties: he would examine what kind of produce was peculiar to his country, and he would encourage its cultivation: he

would wiſh to know what were the exigencies of luxury and vanity in foreign countries, and he would endeavour to adapt thereto, the induſtry of his own ſubjects: he would ſtrive to extend their commerce by advantageous treaties, by encouraging navigation, and by the acquiſition of ſome colonies, whoſe produce might be different from that of the ſoil of his kingdom: in ſhort, becoming more enlightened every day, he would find out, that the augmentation of gold and ſilver was one of the moſt important objects of his policy: and he would conſider that policy as analagous and additional to that which would ſoon force him to maintain an army for his own defence: whilſt, on the other hand, if he had ſtill been ſovereign of a country, unconnected with any other ſtate, ſilver farthings would have been a ſufficient currency, and a few patrols, a ſufficient army.

WHAT I havenow explained in a rational manner, by the above ſuppoſitions, is intirely applicable to the actual ſtate of Europe: an ardent deſire to obtain gold and ſilver

ſilver has gradually become one of the cauſes of all contentions for power: and the utility of ſpecie has been more ſtrongly felt, in thoſe moments, when the uſe made of public credit, has ſhewn the whole extent of the aſſiſtance which national confidence, joined to plenty of gold and ſilver, might afford.

AFTER pointing out what is imperiouſly dictated by the law of neceſſity; after aſcertaining what is required by the neceſſity of being powerful; after diſcovering the views of the ambition of ſovereigns; as long as no means can be deviſed to render civil ſocieties juſt, equitable, and confident in each other; it will unfortunately be a vain diſquiſition, to examine what influence gold and ſilver may have on public felicity. However, for the conſolation of humanity, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, that of all the anxious ſolicitudes of the policy of ſovereigns, that which tends to the increaſe of the ſpecie, is leſs adverſe to the felicity of mankind, than any other. I ſhall not, in the firſt inſtance, agree to what poets and orators

ſay, that this multiplication of gold and ſilver from the treaſures of the new world, has given freſh ſtrength, and new food to avarice and cupidity; for it is neither to the nature, nor to the quantity of ſpecie that theſe paſſions owe their birth, and their increaſe. It was in proportion as time and a variety of arts and talents multiplied the conveniences and enjoyments of life; it was in proportion as commerce brought the different productions of the earth, and of induſtry, within the reach of every claſs of men, that the deſire of riches neceſſarily became general, and has ſucceſſively increaſed; and if gold and ſilver have acquired a greater power over the imagination, that effect muſt not be imputed to their quantity, but rather to their quality of being current money. In fact, let us ſuppoſe, that this common repreſentative of riches had never exiſted; then I believe, leſs ardour would have been ſhewn to acquire wealth: for that man who violates his duty to gain a ſum of money, and to become poſſeſſed of a greater ſhare of that intermediate pledge of every ſort of property, would not

not perhaps, have been guilty of that violation, if he had been obliged to fix his cupidity on any peculiar object: he would then have compared the pleaſure which dreſs, a picture, or any other article of luxury might afford him, with the ſhame or the danger of a contemptible action; and undoubtedly his paſſion would have been much leſs active. But, on the other hand, the man who works both day and night to augment his fortune by honeſt means, would not have the ſame activity, if the enjoyments that he wiſhes for, in an indefinite manner, by wiſhing for gold and ſilver, were to be preciſely aſcertained to his imagination. Thus, money derives a part of its value from a looſe and undefined idea; any quantity whatever of louis d'ors, and ſix livre pieces, is really equal only, to the quantity of commodities or property that may be given in exchange for them; but as gold and ſilver is ſought for and acquired, before the uſe it is to be put to, is determined on, imagination preſents to its future poſſeſſor that attraction, which it throws over every thing elſe.

It is therefore intirely under the view of current money, that gold and ſilver excite in a ſtronger degree the deſire of fortune, and all the paſſions that are connected with that ſentiment: but whatever might be the quantity of theſe precious metals; whatever might be the repreſentative of every ſort of property, whether a grain, an ounce, or a pound of gold, or even of braſs, or any other metal, the ſpirit of intereſt would ſtill be the ſame.

Neither has the augmentation of gold and ſilver had any influence over the progreſs of luxury: the ſame labour, the ſame induſtry, the ſame cauſes of the diſparity of fortunes would have exiſted, let the repreſentatives of barter, or the quantity of money have been what it would. This laſt reflection requires to be better explained; but as I propoſe to enter into a deep inquiry concerning the article of luxury, in the following chapter, I ſhall not anticipate the attention that ſubject demands.

The

THE greateſt ſeeming contradiction between the annual increaſe of the ſpecie, and public felicity, muſt originate in an obſervation that naturally occurs. Every where, the introduction of gold and ſilver is the price paid for any given quantity of the produce of the earth, and of induſtry; and we are tempted to regret ſuch an exchange of real property, for a coarſe, rude matter, which in itſelf preſents neither pleaſure, nor enjoyment. A good patriot, however, will not be uneaſy at it, if he reflects that theſe tranſactions are the effect of free-will: thus, that nation which receives any quantity whatever of precious metals, as the balance of its commerce with foreigners, is no more to be pitied than a number of individuals, who on their return from a public market, where they have ſold a great deal of merchandiſe, lay out a part of the produce, in uſeful and agreeable purchaſes, and carry home money for the remainder. In the ſame manner, in the general market of Europe, and of the whole world, a country ſometimes barters a part of its produce, for other kinds of produce, and ſometimes con-

converts a quantity of it into gold and ſilver, by a multiplicity of commercial tranſactions; and it would be a very ſubtle diſquiſition to endeavour to know in what degree the public felicity is affected by theſe various operations. How could we pretend to ſet a value on the ſenſation produced by the poſſeſſion of money, when that poſſeſſion affords leiſure to make choice of what we wiſh for, quiets the imagination on the uncertainty of future events, and often makes us enjoy in imagination, a greater ſatisfaction, than we ſhould perhaps experience, if we realiſed our plans.

Lastly, whilſt we fix our attention upon the annual importation of ſpecie, in ſuch a country as France, we ought alſo to obſerve that this importation is the reward of labour, which would not perhaps have been exiſting, without this commerce with foreign parts; and yet it is only by an abundance of occupations offered on every part to the multitude, that thoſe who are deſtitute of every ſort of property, can obtain, amidſt the caprices of the rich

rich, ſufficient employment for their daily ſubſiſtence. Thus by a fiction, I repreſent to myſelf all thoſe families that devote their time to the ſeveral manufactories, aſſembled together, and methinks, I hear the genius of commerce telling them: "France overflows in gold and ſilver; "but a part of theſe riches is in the "hands of men, who in order to render "you partakers of the ſlighteſt ſhare of "them, expect you will ſtimulate their "taſte, and feed their caprices: come to "me, and I will ſoften your ſervitude. "Each nation on the ſurface of this "globe lets me into the ſecrets of its "wants, and your induſtry is known to "them through my cares: work, and "I ſhall carry to them the produce of "your labours; I ſhall bring in ex-"change, that gold and that ſilver which "are neceſſary to obtain your ſubſiſtance; "ſecond me, therefore, and I ſhall ren-"der your fate leſs dependant on the taſte "and the will of thoſe wealthy men who "ſurround you."

THIS fiction is a perfect image of the truth, and presents a very great idea of commerce: it shews it to its greatest advantage by pointing out, how it may and does assist that numerous class of citizens whose labours require to have continual support.

I SHALL not extend my reflections any farther, on the various questions relative to money: I have less ambition to teach, than a desire to assist those who wish to meditate on that subject. Nothing is more profoundly abstruse than the concatenation of those ideas that are connected with certain branches of political oeconomy: metaphysics, properly so called, are a labyrinth much less difficult to go through, because we soon arrive on the confines of infinite space, immutable limits, where the mind is obliged to stop its career: but the different branches of political oeconomy present the image of an immense circuit, where the various roads cross each other in such a manner, that unless by dint of a persevering attention, we cannot distinguish that which leads to the goal.

goal. And though time and experience have reduced very complicated truths to common axioms, it is not the leſs important for miniſters in general, to ſtudy theſe truths, and to be enabled to judge of them otherwiſe than by a blind confidence: is is then only, that in conducting of public affairs, they become ſufficiently ſkilful to diſcern the modifications which circumſtances require; then they may arrive at a juſt medium between thoſe principles that ſeem to be in oppoſition to each other: laſtly, it is then that an enlightened knowledge prevents their giving dangerous interpretations to things, and ſacrificing old eſtabliſhed reaſon, to the ambitious pride of new ſyſtems.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

CONSIDERATIONS ON LUXURY AND ITS PROGRESSIVE INCREASE.

WHEN the progreſs of luxury is ſolely attributed to a change of manners, to the nature of governments, and to the acquiſition of the treaſures of the new world, we loſe ourſelves, in vain diſcourſes and indefinite arguments. And when we ſay in general, that luxury is the conſequence of the diſparity of fortunes, we have then advanced only one ſingle ſtep towards the knowledge of truth. The idea is certainly juſt; but by what means is that diſparity increaſed, and wherefore was it indiſpenſably neceſſary it ſhould increaſe? This is the firſt important conſideration that ought to fix our attention, when we en-

endeavour to diſcover the ſource and the origin of the progreſs of luxury.

THAT progreſs would not have exiſted, if the diſproportion of fortune had not increaſed every day. The errors of adminiſtration have undoubtedly contributed to the growth of inequality in the diſtribution of property: but we muſt look for its primary and moſt powerful cauſe, in the very nature of things.

I OBSERVE one of the claſſes of ſociety, whoſe circumſtances muſt always be nearly the ſame; I perceive another claſs whoſe riches muſt neceſſarily increaſe: the luxury therefore, which is relative to their different conditions, muſt follow the courſe of that diſparity and become more evident, each ſucceeding year.

THAT claſs of ſociety, whoſe fate is fixed, as it were, by the effect of the ſocial laws, conſiſts of all thoſe, who working for their livelihood, are ſubjected to the imperious will of men of property, and are forced to be ſatisfied with receiving a ſalary

ary adequate to the common neceſſities of life; their own competition, and the urency of their wants conſtitute their ſtate of dependence; and theſe circumſtances cannot change. Every age, and every country preſent the ſame ſpectacle; and there it no exception, nor mitigation of that ſpecies of ſlavery, but in thoſe few ſtates, where the form of government leaves any political rights in the hands of the people, the enjoyment of which has an inflence over its conſideration, and furniſhes it ſome means of reſiſtance.

THE claſs of ſociety, whoſe riches are inncreaſed by length of time, conſiſts of the owners of every kind of property; and it is by pointing out in a diſtinct manner the cauſe of that augmentation that we ſhall be enabled to give an exact idea of the real ſource of the progreſs of luxury.

THE riches of a country, viewed in a general manner, and excluſively of gold and ſilver, which we ſhall afterwards mention, conſiſt in the extent of the produce of its lands, and in the barter which is made

made of that produce, for the various works of art, and the perſonal ſervices of men. Thus, riches muſt have neceſſarily increaſed, in proportion as the art of cultivation has been brought to perfection: and the exterior uſe of theſe riches, muſt likewiſe have been diverſified and increaſed, in proportion as a greater quantity of articles of magnificence, or of well finiſhed, delicate accommodations, have been given in exchange for the ſame quantity of the produce of the earth as formerly.

The ſucceſſive invention of the inſtruments that have ſimplified each mechanical art, has therefore augmented the wealth and good fortune of land proprietors: ſome of theſe inſtruments, by leſſening the charges of cultivation, have increaſed the income which the poſſeſſors of theſe lands may diſpoſe of, and the other part of theſe ingenious diſcoveries has facilitated the labours of induſtry in ſuch a manner that the men, who are obliged to work for thoſe who diſtribute to them a daily ſubſiſtence, may in an equal ſpace of time, and for the ſame ſalary, fabricate

a greater quantity of works of every kind than heretofore.

LET us ſuppoſe, that one hundred thouſand workmen were requiſite in the laſt century, to do that which can now be done by eighty thouſand; then the remaining twenty thouſand would be under the neceſſity of applying themſelves to a different occupation in order to procure a ſalary: and the new pieces of workmanſhip that would reſult from this, would increaſe the enjoyments and the luxury of the wealthy; for we muſt not forget, that the wages given to all thoſe workmen, whoſe trade does not require great abilities, are always proportioned to the price of the ſubſiſtence neceſſary for each workman: thus the rapidity of execution when an art is become common, does not turn to the advantage of the workmen; and its only reſult is, an increaſe of the means to gratify the taſte and vanity of thoſe who have the produce of the earth at their diſpoſal.

It is therefore, by a confuſion of ideas, that the honour of being the parent of arts is attributed to luxury: but it is rather to the progreſs of ſciences of every ſort, that we ought to impute the increaſe of luxury. There always was a certain claſs of ſociety, who poſſeſſed a ſuperabundance of riches: but before induſtry had made any great progreſs, the articles of mere convenience required tedious labour, and thoſe who devoted all their time to the ſervice of the land proprietors; could only accumulate a very circumſcribed quantity of the works of art: but the means of luxury are increaſed in proportion as men have acquired the ſkill to perform in a month, that which formerly required a year's labour.

I shall now point out another cauſe of the progreſs of luxury, and which is equally connected with the natural courſe of things.

Amongst the various gifts of nature, which the induſtry of man moulds and modifies to their taſte; there is a great quantity

whoſe duration far exceeds the ordinary term of human life: each generation inherits a part of the works of the preceding generation; and a large portion of the productions of the different arts is ſucceſſively accumulated in every country: and as that portion is always ſhared among the proprietors, the diſproportion between their enjoyments, and thoſe of the moſt numerous claſſes of citizens, muſt neceſſarily be greater and more taken notice of.

THE man, who becomes poſſeſſor by inheritance, of a magnificent houſe, enriched with gildings, glaſſes, pictures and other coſtly furniture, is under no neceſſity to procure that ſpecies of luxury: he therefore devotes the ſurplus of his income to adorn his gardens, to enlarge his parks, to multiply his jewels, and his plate: his ſon, heir to all this property, aſſigns his income to ſome other purpoſe, and ſeeks for new objects of oſtentation and ſuperiority. Thus it is, that real riches have been accumulated, and the gifts made by one generation increaſe the luxury of that which follows.

IN

In order to ſtop this progreſs, it would have been neceſſary, to have enjoined the diſtributors of the annual produce of the earth, to ſpend their overplus in the choice of ſuch ſumptuous articles whoſe duration could never exceed the ordinary term of life: but ſuch a law would have been abſurd, and this method of reſtraining the increaſe of luxury, would be ſimilar to the conſequences of an inundation, or an earthquake.

There is another obſtacle leſs formidable indeed, to the exaggerated progreſs of luxury: namely the inconſtancy of taſte, and the empire of faſhion. There would be a much greater number of workmen employed to multiply the objects of magnificence, if a great number of thoſe who are in the pay of wealthy men, were not continually buſied in altering what was done the day before. We are accuſtomed to criticiſe gravely, this ſpirit of levity; but the true ſtateſman does not approve of ſuch inconſiderate ſeverity. He is conſcious, that as time continually accumulates a multiplicity of the works of

induſtry in every branch, if the deſire of variety did not engage us to renew them, affluent perſons would ſoon be led to ſpend their incomes in a manner entirely contrary to the good of ſociety: they would maintain a greater number of ſervants, whoſe morals would be already corrupted by ſloth; they would leſſen the conſumption of men, to keep a greater number of horſes: a great part of their poſſeſſions would be laid out in parks, or barren gardens: they would render the culinary art, ſtill more deſtructive, by new refined inventions; and every kind of expence, the moſt adverſe to population and to the ſtrength of the ſtate, would acquire a greater extenſion: whilſt, on the other hand, the moſt reaſonable uſe of riches, when employed intirely to ſatisfy the vanity of individuals, is undoubtedly, that kind of expence, which finds occupation for the greateſt number of men, and maintains the peaceful taſte of arts, and the daily employment of ſkilful induſtry.

I HAVE not as yet examined, if, conformable to the common opinion, the increaſe

creaſe of ſpecie, and the importation of the treaſures of the new world, are among the principle cauſes of the growth of luxury. I do not believe it; for the acceleration in the finiſhing of works of induſtry, that has multiplied the articles of ſumptuoſity and oſtentation, time that has augmented their quantity, and the laws of property, that have accumulated theſe riches in the hands of one ſingle claſs of ſociety; all theſe great ſources of luxury would equally have exiſted, whatever might have been the quantity of ſpecie: a palace would have been repreſented by one hundred thouſand livres, inſtead of ten times that ſum: but that palace would nevertheleſs have been conſtructed. We can only remark, that the diſcovery of the treaſures of America, having rendered gold and ſilver more common in Europe, a greater quantity of works compoſed with theſe precious metals, has been manufactured: but if productions of that kind had been more ſcarce, the quantity of other articles of workmanſhip would have been increaſed in proportion; becauſe the time, the labour and induſtry of all thoſe who

are devoid of property, would always have been devoted to the vanities, the pride and the pleaſures of thoſe on whom they muſt depend for their ſalaries.

Lastly, I muſt add, that the multiplication of communications, the building of bridges, digging of canals, and rendering rivers navigable, by dint of art, are ſo many works that have contributed to the increaſe of luxury; becauſe the facility of communication has concentered in the cities, a greater part of the income of the proprietors.

It reſults, however, from theſe various reflections, that luxury, in the natural courſe of things muſt neceſſarily have increaſed every year; and when hiſtory offers any exceptions to this truth, it is almoſt always owing to ſome uncommon circumſtances: thus, the progreſs of luxury may have ſometimes been delayed, by thoſe republican laws which ordained a new diſtribution of lands to take place, ſometimes by thoſe tyrannical vexations that obliged individuals to conceal their circum-

cumſtances, or to enjoy them by ſtealth; but luxury was more particularly retarded, by thoſe devaſtations that were the conſequences of the invaſions of barbarous nations, and by thoſe natural calamities that have ſometimes thrown back the inhabitants of a country to the ſame ſtate as they were in, at a very diſtant period.

Now, if on the one hand, luxury makes a certain unavoidable progreſs, which even the ſcience of adminiſtration cannot ſet bounds to, it has on the other, exceſſes which the laws, the prudence of government, morality, and public opinion may at leaſt moderate.

In fact, whatever may be the quantity of the various ſorts of property that are accumulated in ſociety, either by time, by the perfection of the ſpirit of induſtry, or by all thoſe inventions that facilitate manual labour; if the diſproportion of property was leſs conſiderable, the number of individuals who might attain to the enjoyment of objects of mere convenience would be increaſed;

creaſed; and the number of thoſe, who are now able to ſpend a great part of their income in ſplendid ſuperfluities, would diminiſh in proportion. Undoubtedly, the greateſt part of theſe inequalities can neither be changed nor prevented; the common order of inheritance, the fortunes acquired in trade, the relations of intereſt that all men have with each other, the continual agitations of a large ſociety, the errors of ſome, the good underſtanding of others; all theſe circumſtances unavoidably introduce a great diſparity in the diviſion of property; and the more a country is naturally wealthy, the greater and more glaring that diſparity may be. Government could not habitually interfere, in the midſt of this immenſe circulation, without running the riſk of producing greater evils than thoſe it might want to correct: but at leaſt, it ought not to augment that diſproportion by an inconſiderate form of adminiſtration: now, nothing is more contrary to an equality in the diviſion of property, than levying of money on the totality of a kingdom, for the advantage of a ſmall number of perſons already in a favourable

vourable ſituation: and yet, that is preciſely, what is done by a bad government, when a part of the taxes is conſumed either by extravagant donations, or by conſiderable emoluments attached to ſinecure places, or by the too great fortunes that financiers are allowed to make. We may alſo obſerve on this occaſion, that the public is more particularly ſhocked at that luxury which is introduced by the prodigalities, or negligence of adminiſtration; it bears with patience, the advantages and ſuperiority given by right of property; but thoſe fortunes that are compoſed of the taxes paid by each citizen, become a continual ſource of complaints, and envy.

THE want of order, in the adminiſtration of the finances, and the diffidence that reſults from it, are alſo indirect cauſes of the increaſe of diſproportions in the diviſion of property: for in extraordinary exigencies, diſcredit obliges government to borrow at a very high rate of intereſt; and by that manoeuvre, the revenues of the ſovereign which conſiſt of the contributions of all the inhabitants of the kingdom, are

are diſtributed to the profit of the circumſcribed claſs of annuitants, who are almoſt every one inhabitants of great cities.

THUS, public adminiſtration is moreover to be blamed for the increaſe of the inequality of fortunes, and the progreſſes of luxury, when it deviates from the principles of order and juſtice, that ought to ſerve as the rule of its conduct.

BUT, if on the contrary, and in conſequence of an equitable ſyſtem of oeconomy, the heads of government can compaſs the diminution of taxes, by reducing the rate of intereſt, and reſtraining the grants of favours and prodigalities, then they reſtore to the general maſs, all that they drew from it, by the invaſion of private individuals; and leſſening by that method, the inequality of fortunes, they oppoſe to the utmoſt of their power, and by juſt means, the acceleration of the progreſs of luxury.

THE exterior effect of luxury will be rendered leſs ſenſible, when they ſhall pay a ſerious attention to better the circumſtances

ſtances of that numerous claſs of men, whom ſocial laws and the influence of property circumſcribe ſo much in their enjoyments. The wiſh of that good King Henry IV. unfortunately, it is impoſſible to execute; but as I have already had occaſion to mention; the nature of the taxes, the principles of aſſeſſment, the method of collection, the eſtabliſhment of public works, that may keep up the price of day labour, the diſtribution of aſſiſtance in times of calamity, a careful inſpection of the dealers in corn, that they may not abuſe the liberty they enjoy, the ſucceſſive annihilation of perſonal ſervices on the highways; in ſhort, all the cares, that might be expected from the eſtabliſhment of a provincial adminiſtration, in each province, and numberleſs other arrangements that iſſue from the power of the ſovereign; are ſo many means offered to government to leſſen a little, the immenſe diſtance that exiſts between the fate of one claſs of ſociety, and that of all the reſt.

LASTLY, there is yet another method to be taken to moderate the effects of

luxury: namely, to excite the ſpirit of beneficence in the nation; for all the expences that proceed from this precious ſentiment, enjoy the double advantage, to mitigate the hardſhips of the poor, and to bear only on that part of the incomes of the rich, which they expend in articles of magnificence.

THUS, a citizen, whoſe generoſity is well directed, retrieves in proportion to his circumſtances, the errors of an inconſiderate gvernment: the latter, by overburdening the people with taxes, takes away a part of its competency, to augment the conveniences of thoſe who are already favoured by fortune, whilſt a beneficent wealthy man, on the contrary, leſſens the inequality of the primary diviſions of property, by allotting a part of his ſurplus to the relief of the moſt needy claſs of ſociety. But, it will perhaps be aſked, what influence the ſovereign can have over this ſpirit of beneficence? That which will conſtantly ſpring from his approbation, the encouragement he ſhall give, and the aſcendancy of ſo great an example. A landed

landed proprietor who is both rich and virtuous makes his tenants happy: he ſpends a part of his income to encourage uſeful labour, and he looks on it as a duty to reſide ſome part of the year, on his eſtate, in order to diſcover the wretched and to aſſiſt them.

Now, when this eſtimable man comes to court, let him be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who behave very differently. Let the miniſters, in the name of the ſovereign, beſtow ſome token of regard on thoſe citizens, who in a claſs more diſtant from the throne, acquire a right to the public eſteem: in ſhort, let the ſtates of the provinces, and the provincial adminiſtrations excited by government, ſecond this ſalutary motion; and the public ſpirit will change. What is ſought for, by glaring expences, but that conſideration which is attached to the idea of riches? but a word, a look of a ſovereign, elevates the imagination, in a monarchy, more than any other honours. Laſtly, moral qualities may alſo become the object of emulation, as well as the many illuſions, that are ſo earneſtly purſued;

ſued; and that revolution would eaſily take place, if thoſe qualities could be of any uſe, even in the career of ambition.

During the courſe of my adminiſtration, I clearly perceived, that the various beneficent arrangements, which the King engaged in, were the occaſion of ſeveral generous actions done by private individuals; no nation in the world is more ſuſceptible of imitation than the French, and this conſideration renders the virtues of their ſoverreign ſo much the more precious.

Lastly, in France, the monarch may likewiſe ſet bounds to luxury, by obliging all thoſe who exerciſe important functions, whether civil, religious, or military, to reſide in their reſpective provinces. It is in thoſe ſituations, where a man is reſtrained by the duties of his office, it is in towns of a moderate extent that the regularity of his conduct is moſt obſerved: a great theatre encourages the diſplay of abilities; but a ſmall one is more favourable to the moral virtues. Scarcely any where

where elſe but in the metropolis, do we ſee that ſpecies of luxury, which originates in an entire relaxation of principles, the mode of abridged education that is received there, the independence which young noblemen acquire at too early a period of their lives, by being married before they are able to guide themſelves; the little time they devote to the knowledge of their own affairs; in ſhort, the hope they entertain of retrieving their fortune, by the favours of the ſovereign, or by having a ſhare in financial contracts: all theſe cauſes of negligence and diſorder, very often increaſe the expences of individuals, in proportion to the ſums of money they are able to borrow; and thus it is, that depravity of morals, and licentiouſneſs of conduct, introduces a ſort of luxury that may be conſidered as foreign to the natural diſparity of riches.

The daily increaſe of the above diſorder might be remedied, by accelerating the effects of civil proceſſes againſt thoſe debtors who are not exact to their engagements; the too eaſy grants of writs of

ſuperſedeas, is more eſpecially contrary to the moral end that ought to be had in view; becauſe they are the means of leſſening the dangers attached to irregularity: but if theſe grants were to be conſtantly refuſed, without exception, it would alſo be neceſſary to ſet about leſſening the enormous expences, that are incurred by a judiciary ſettling of debts.

THE laws that in ſome countries, and in certain provinces of France governed by the common law, give all the paternal eſtate to the eldeſt ſon, and thoſe that carry entails too far, are favourable to luxury, becauſe they maintain an inequality of riches.

THE aſſeſſment of a great part of the taxes on articles of oſtentation and ſuperfluity, is a very prudent arrangement, becauſe it is a proper means to leſſen the effects of the ſuperiority of fortunes.

THOSE writers are in the wrong, who have aſſerted that this policy is unknown in France. I ſhall not take upon to me decide

cide, whether the taxes on luxury owe their origin to the conſiderate views of adminiſtration; but it cannot be denied, that this ſpecies of reſource has been long employed: ſervants are taxed by the poll tax: carriages and ſaddle horſes, by the duties impoſed on the articles of their conſumption; the tables of the rich, by the impoſts levied on each article of delicacy; gold and ſilver furniture, by ſtamp-duties; various ſuperfluities ſuch as playing cards, tobacco, ſnuff, ſtarch, gunpowder, and ſundry ſimilar articles bear heavy taxes; ſugar and coffee are raiſed in price by the ſame means. In ſhort, whilſt fiſcal knowledge was employed in each poſſible method of increaſing the public revenue, the expences of monied men were not overlooked: but that ſome bounds muſt be ſet to the taxes on articles of luxury, is generally agreed on for their own intereſt by the Farmers-General, that the activity of the ſmugglers may be balanced by the precautions taken againſt them. Even, though that conſideration did not exiſt, there would be ſome meaſure to be obſerved in the aſſeſſment of the taxes im-

poſed on articles of luxury; it would be want of policy, if too ſenſible a reſtraint was laid on the uſe of riches, and more eſpecially in thoſe countries, where great part of the fortunes of individuals become moveable, owing to the increaſe of the public debts; which circumſtance facilitates, to a great number of individuals, the means of emigration, and of leaving thoſe countries where the revenue laws prove too ſevere. So that it is ſolely by temperate, prudent, and above all, practicable means, that I propoſe to government to modify the effects of luxury. Undoubtedly, one may go greater lengths in republics; and it is right ſo to do, in thoſe little political communities, where any extraordinary ſuperiority gives offence, where the ſimplicity of morals ſtrengthens the ſocial order, where the magiſtrates being in general, nearly on the ſame footing as the other citizens, would ſcarcely be able to command the reſpect due to them; if they were obſcured by the oſtentatious luxury of their equals. In general, ſtates whoſe ſtrength and extent are narrowly circumſcribed, ought rather to attend to the

the propereſt means of maintaining internal peace, confidence and ſubordination, than to any of thoſe political ideas, that tend principally to the increaſe of riches.

But reforms, reſtrictions, and ſumptuary laws are not applicable to great monarchies: theſe ſocial auſterities could not be maintained without ſetting up an inquiſition infinitely more dangerous than the evil practices they would be calculated to remedy. And more eſpecially, in a country like France, where public credit is ſo neceſſary, and the ſpirit of locking up money out of circulation, ſo prejudicial; where they are neceſſarily obliged to maintain and increaſe the quantity of riches, in order to have a reſpectable internal force; where, in ſhort, the general luxury of Europe introduces ſuch great advantages, by means of commerce; it would be a very wrong policy to adopt ſumptuary laws. In great ſtates, men ought neceſſarily to be rather left to the natural courſe of things: unhappily, perfection is a chimerical idea, neither thoſe who govern, nor

thoſe who are governed, could ever reach it; and beſides, it is rational to attend only, to thoſe inconveniences whereof luxury is the real parent; and an adminiſtrator of the finances, ought not to be guided in his opinions by the exaggerated declamations, which are ſometimes made on that ſubject; they hold out luxury as the parent of poverty, but that is not a juſt idea; for poverty is the conſequence of the unequal diſtribution of property, and of the inſufficiency of the reſources, which men without any property may aſpire to; but luxury is likewiſe the conſequence of that diſparity of fortune: ſo that luxury and poverty are often found together, not as the reſpective conſequences of each other, but as the common reſult of the inequality of the diſtribution of property. If political rigour was to be extended too far, we might in vain be continually anxious about a number of reſults inſeparable from the conſtant agitation of ſociety, and we ſhould perhaps be brought to regret the invention of the plough, which by accelerating rural induſtry, yields a greater ſhare of the produce of the earth to the land-

land-proprietors. But arts, ſciences, and the Belles Lettres, thoſe attendants on proſperity, have indemnified mankind for the invaſions of ſimplicity of manners, by the increaſe of riches: thoſe various flights of genius, have made men acquainted with their ſtrength, have enlarged the opinion they themſelves had conceived of it; and when a paſſion for war, and deſpotiſm, which marches in its train, inſenſibly tend to enſlave their perſons, it is by their knowledge, that they defend themſelves, at leaſt, from the ſlavery of the mind.

LASTLY, and this reflection is made for thoſe who have too much ſenſibility; the contraſt between the luxury of ſome, and the too narrow circumſtances of others, is not the meaſure of happineſs! Alas, who could believe it! Thoſe whom the laws of property, in every age, have reduced to the mere neceſſaries of life, are the very perſons, who behold the oſtentatious diſplay of riches with the cooleſt indifference: grandeur is ſo remote from their habitual ideas, that they accuſtom themſelves to look upon it, as the attribute of a few

beings of a ſpecies different from theirs; and as they return ſlowly home to their cottages, under the preſſure of a burden they can ſcarcely bear, they ſee thoſe fiery courſers, who rapidly whirl the magnificent chariots of the rich and the noble, cloſe by them, and view them with the ſame indifference, as they contemplate thoſe wandering ſtars over their heads, whoſe twinkling motion they juſt diſcern. It is rather thoſe who are eaſy in their circumſtances; it is rather thoſe who enjoy the conveniences of life, that are envious of the luxury of others; it is in thoſe ſituations that vanity is awakened, and that this paſſion becomes the ſource of envy; to be free from it, we muſt carefully avoid quitting the ſituation in which we have been placed by fortune; we muſt keep at a diſtance from an object, which we are ſo weak as not to be able to bear. Alas! how unreaſonable are thoſe, who give way to this kind of torment! Let them learn, that the ſplendour with which they are ſhocked, is not happineſs; and let them be convinced by viewing the diſturbed imaginations of thoſe who diſplay ſo much

much wealth; ſoon habituated to theſe vain enjoyments, they are continually wiſhing for others, which would very ſoon equally diſguſt them; and whilſt their fate is envied, they fall a prey to the wearineſs that attends effeminacy and idleneſs. Undoubtedly, it is neceſſary that every man ſhould have a ſmall ſhare of ambition, becauſe it is neceſſary he ſhould entertain ſome ſmall ſhare of hope: but a continual covetouſneſs, and thoſe chimerical notions often entertained, of the pleaſures of vanities we cannot attain, are the moſt unfortunate of all follies. I do not know, whether it be the effect of enlightened reflection, or whether it be becauſe every thing in the univerſe tends continually to give us an idea of a ſimple equality; but I am apt to believe, that in the deſtiny of men, there is leſs inequality than is commonly thought; ſovereigns, therefore, ought not to be diſcouraged by being led to think that it is above their power to alter that ſyſtem of diſproportion: it is not the order of nature, nor that of the ſocial compact, that they are to overthrow; all that can be expected from

from them is to modify thoſe inſtitutions which are contrary to the public welfare; to temper exceſſes, and put a ſtop to abuſive practices: to promote general proſperity to the utmoſt of their power, and to do for the happineſs of thoſe they govern, that which any private man would do for his own: they ought, therefore, neither to be indifferent to luxury, and its exceſſes, nor deſirous to deſtroy it entirely; and perhaps in all branches of adminiſtration, the good that may be actually done, and that which is to be kept in view, depend continually on an exact proportion in our plans, and a perfect knowledge of the boundaries aſſigned to all true maxims.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

ON THE FORTUNES OF FINANCIERS.

THIS ſubject naturally occurs after the foregoing conſiderations on luxury; and though I have already pointed out in the courſe of this work, a ſmall number of primary ideas on the queſtion I am going to treat, I think it neceſſary to collect them together in this place, and to annex to them ſome new reflections.

In France we give the title of financiers to all the various officers who are intruſted with the collection of the public revenue, either as Receivers, Farmers, or adminiſtrators;

under the ſame denomination are alſo compriſed the treaſurers who pay the expences of the ſtate, the court bankers who tranſact money buſineſs for the department of foreign affairs, and the different perſons, who are allowed a certain commiſſion to make advances of money, reimburſable at the more or leſs diſtant periods of the payment of the taxes into the royal exchequer.

It has been obſerved, that during the courſe of my miniſtry, I was conſtantly employed in limiting both the number and the profits of theſe various agents; and notwithſtanding all the complaints that were made, I muſt own, I ſhould have made ſtill greater reforms, if it had been in my power; but it was impoſſible in the midſt of war, to attain to perfection in every branch; becauſe the exraordinary exigences, conſuming all the reſources of public credit, they could not be employed to reimburſe to the financial companies the greateſt part of the capital ſums owing to them; and yet, this is the only ſtep to be taken, in order to be entirely

at

at liberty to make choice of the arrangements moſt favourable to the public. Undoubtedly, there are very few obſtacles of this kind but what may be ſet aſide by authority: but that authority ought never to be employed to commit injuſtice, and it would be forming a wrong idea of what is moſt conducive to the good of the ſtate, to imagine that the having a ſalutary regulation in view, is a ſufficient juſtification for employing any means to attain it: the firſt advantage of ſociety, is the reſpect paid to property; abuſive practices and uſeleſs emoluments are certainly an uſurpation of that right, and ought to be repelled; but it muſt be done in a lawful manner; and it is better to make a ſlower progreſs towards perfection, than to ſhake the principles of good faith, on which the ſecurity of the nation is founded.

BESIDES, it was ſufficient to have every thing in readineſs, to complete on the concluſion of peace, that which might be ſtill wanting to the work I had very much forwarded. I could not therefore

avoid being very much affected on ſeeing the former financial ſyſtem revived; and I ſhall here aſſign my reaſons for thinking that ſyſtem both impolitic and pernicious.

At one time, it is under the pretence of rendering the accounting part more eaſy that the number of agents deſtined to receive the revenue, or pay the expences, is increaſed; and at another, it is entirely, in the view of obtaining freſh means of credit, through their mediation. The firſt of theſe motives, is frivolous in the higheſt degree: the keeping of accounts may be rendered as clear by ſeparating the various articles, as by increaſing the number of accountants. The ſecond pretence is advanced with more confidence; and all thoſe who have in view to multiply and enrich the financiers, do not fail to hold them out as being intermediary perſons indiſpenſably neceſſary to public credit; as if that credit had not its own peculiar ſtrength, and as if it wanted the aid of a number of agents, who themſelves poſſeſs the confidence of the public, only in conſider-

ſideration of their places and their known connections with government. On my entering into adminiſtration, I found all theſe ideas eſtabliſhed; and I flatter myſelf, I demonſtrated, by an entirely different conduct, how deceitful ſuch a doctrine was. I made numberleſs reforms in the financial places; and yet public credit in whatever manner it was had recourſe to, ſucceſſively increaſed; a certain proof that this credit may be entirely ſupported upon its own natural baſis, which is the good ſituation of affairs, the knowledge that is communicated of it to the nation, and the ſteady conduct of a circumſpect adminiſtration: it is a fortunate circumſtance to have a precedent to cite in ſupport of good principles; for it is by decrying them as abſtruſe and ſpeculative, and by oppoſing to them, with diſdain, principles deduced from ſimple *routine*, that the enemies of uſeful truths have very often had great advantages over them.

It has ſometimes been ſaid of a miniſter; bankers and financiers love him; he will find great reſources among them: what

an

an illuſion! Will it be eaſily believed, that their confidence is determined by an inclination, a predilection, or—I know not what: no, and it is much better to find, in the money lenders, a ſentiment of eſteem, even ſometimes mixed with ſome perſonal diſcontents.

I AM well aware, that the leſs fortune financiers are poſſeſſed of, the leſs money they will have to advance; but if the profits they make on the public money are to be the ſource of that fortune, is the extenſion of ſuch means to be wiſhed for? No, undoubtly; and when I ſee government enrich and increaſe the number of financiers, with a view of making uſe of their money, it recals to mind, that Bagdad merchant, who having clothed his ſlaves with turbans ſpangled with gold, and magnificent robes, was ſo ſtruck with reſpect for them, that through an involuntary motion he proſtrated himſelf before them, and implored their protection.

WHAT often leads the adminiſtrator of the finances into an error is this, no company,

company, nor any private individuals ever offer themſelves, as receivers, farmers, or collectors, without artfully propoſing to advance a certain ſum of money, or offering to borrow ſome millions in the name of government. But in that caſe, adminiſtration, if we ſuppoſe it to be diveſted of the ſpirit of favour, or of protection, ought to examine whether this pretended aſſiſtance, is not to ſupply the place of money to be lent to government under another name by theſe contractors.

This reflection is never made by the miniſters of finance; and yet, both reaſoning and experience proved to me in the cleareſt manner, that moſt propoſals of that ſort were mere baits; but when one is not on one's guard, it is excuſable to be deceived, for though the above obſervation is very ſimple, when made, it does not naturally occur. Beſides, a prudent government ought at all times to connect the credit that it intends to make uſe of, with the public intereſt in general, and not with the ſignature of thoſe whom it has choſen to be intermediary.

ADMINISTRATION even gives occaſion to think, that it no longer depends ſo much on the confidence of the public, when it is ſeen to rely leſs on that valuable acquiſition, than upon the credit of the agents that it employs. Theſe, nevertheleſs, cannot enjoy a conſiderable credit, unleſs it be by illuſion: for if government was not exact in its engagements with them, they could not be punctual with others; and yet the court-bankers, the treaſurers, farmers, and receivers-general endeavour to ſet off their loans, as the conſequence of their own private credit; whilſt all their means are only ſo many various modifications of the public credit; it is by conſtantly preſenting this juſt idea to the financiers, that they will be deterred from dictating their own terms, and requiring unreaſonable ſacrifices. Public credit is one of the moſt noble attributes of government, when that confidence is due to its conduct and good faith; but it is a degradation of this noble idea, when the ſtrength of an empire is left to depend on a few individuals grown wealthy through its careleſſneſs.

THUS it is, that what is truly great, is rendered trifling, and what is ſimple becomes complicated; thus it is, that ſyſtems of a day are ſubſtituted to thoſe principles, that are adapted to all times and circumſtances.

AND yet, ſo ſevere has ſometimes been the yoke impoſed by the agents of the loans made by government, that they have occaſionally been known to refuſe their aſſiſtance all on a ſudden, in the very midſt of a rapid circulation of ſpecie, the courſe of which they directed; and ſometimes they have even imperiouſly dictated laws, and demanded the removal of a miniſter, as one condition for the continuation of their ſervices. Undoubtedly, they pretended to be ſupported by the public opinion; but how often, have they not wrongfully interpreted that opinion, by being concerned in ſome intrigue againſt the miniſter. The court bankers are, to an inattentive and improvident miniſter, what the Pretorian bands were to the Roman Emperors, who effeminately ſhut themſelves up in their palaces: they ſerv-

ed them for a time, and afterwards deprived them of the throne.

WHAT a ſubverſion of all order, to allow private individuals to become poſſeſſed of ſo great an authority? I would alſo warn miniſters againſt thoſe calculations, which ſeem to prove that ſavings reſult from the multiplication of fiſcal agents: theſe are legerdemain tricks, and the ſecret of them is not divulged. I own, it is not always eaſy to follow financial arithmetic in all its windings; and as numbers, I don't know how, appear to be a kind of magical figures to thoſe who are not early familiariſed with them, I would adviſe the adminiſtrators of the finances, to depend moſtly on ſound reaſoning; then, when attempts ſhould be made to prove, for inſtance, that twenty Receivers will coſt leſs than ten, they will be able to ſay, to theſe protectors of financiers; ſince you have the talent to make ſavings by increaſing the number of agents, what might you not do, if you were to apply that talent to leſſen the expences

pences of a ſmaller number? They would certainly be at a loſs to anſwer this obſervation; and thus it is, that good ſenſe very often ſupplies the want of ſcience.

However, the general principles of morality and adminiſtration would be much more inſtructive, if they were applied to the object of this diſquiſition. In the firſt inſtance, it is ſurely a political evil to attach a great number of citizens to a profeſſion devoid of any public good, and ſingular in this above all others; namely, that it is almoſt the only one, in which the progreſs of fortune is independent of the public opinion; in fact, if we examine every claſs of citizens, from the military, and magiſtracy, down to the loweſt tradeſman and ſimple journeyman, we ſhall find that this opinion encourages talents, becomes the ſource of the reward beſtowed on them; and from that moment, to the great advantage of ſocial order, a connection is formed between the deſire of fame and perſonal intereſt, which guides all its meaſures; but the merit that proceeds

ceeds from the exerciſe of the functions of fiſcal agents, is never remarked, and the honour that reſults from their abilities, is, as it were, a glory confined to the brotherhood, and ſcarcely ever ſhines out of the aſſembly of the copartners. I do not mean to ſay, that honeſty is not infinitely neceſſary, and precious, in thoſe who devote themſelves to ſuch an occupation: I mean only to ſhew, that this honeſty is not, as in other profeſſions, held out to notice by public opinion; ſo that the calculations of ſelf intereſt are not its daily ſupport.

We may alſo look on the aſcendancy of financiers over the tranſaction of public affairs, in proportion as they grow more wealthy, or multiplied, as a moral inconvenience. They cannot love that which tends to ſimplify the organization of the taxes, becauſe it is from the multiplicity of its ſprings, that their ſcience appears great; they cannot even be diſpoſed to ſecond the chief of the finances in any vaſt, or general plan; it is eaſy for them to conceive, that the more a miniſter

niſtes conſiders his adminiſtration in a partial light, the greater power they ſhall acquire; becauſe it is the urgency, or unforeſeen exigences of the ſtate that render their aſſiſtance neceſſary. It happens alſo, that when adminiſtration is forced by its unſkilfulneſs and improvidence to have recourſe to theſe means, it is obliged to over-rate the ſervices of the fianciers, in order to perſuade the public, that it is only for very great advantages that it ſacrifices the principles to which the nation ſeems attached: thus as uſeleſs, or dangerous plants are never obſerved to grow with ſo much vigour as in unwholeſome climates, or during intemperate ſeaſons, ſo, the power of theſe finance agents is increaſed and fortified only, in the midſt of the horrors of war, and of the confuſions of the ſtate.

Lastly, being a friend to mildneſs in the exerciſe of authority, which is always a ſufficient mode, when government is prudent, I muſt reproach the finance departments with too great an inclination to adopt ideas of deſpotiſm and ſeverity; becauſe the de-

ſire of collecting the taxes without any obſtacle, ſometimes finds an advantage in the fear and terror with which it alarms the contributaries.

HERE however, I feel it incumbent on me to declare, that perſonality is very far from my thoughts, in theſe general reflections: I will even add, that at preſent, the good qualities of the principal finance officers, moderate the inconveniences attached to the recent veneration I have ſeen them treated with: and I even know ſome among them, who are ſo diſtinguiſhed both by their ſentiments and their characters, that they would perhaps ſubſcribe to all I have ſaid. In all profeſſions, each individual is ſeparately, what a good natural diſpoſition, or education have made him: but in matters of adminiſtration, we muſt always look forward to the collective ſentiments by which all bodies are guided; and theſe ſentiments are not a mixture of the diverſe qualities of all the individuals, that compoſe thoſe bodies; but the reſult of the common intereſt that unites them. Thus whatever might be the merit of the principal fin-

financiers, the increaſe of their number, and of their ſtability would not be the leſs contrary to the ſpirit of adminiſtration, which muſt continually look for ſimplicity in its means, extenſion in its plans, oeconomy in its expences, independence in its reſources, and above all the happineſs and advantage of the people.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SOLICITATIONS OF THE GREAT.

THE moment, perhaps, in which a miniſter of the finances finds it moſt requiſite to ſummon all his fortitude is, when it is proper he ſhould reſiſt the ſolicitations of Perſons, who hold the firſt rank in the ſtate, either by their birth, or their places. They very ſoon become acquainted with the character of the chief of the finances: they quickly diſcover, whether he intends to depend entirely on his conduct for protection, or whether he endeavours to ſupport himſelf by the favour and

and influence of the great; they are not long before they find out, whether he intends to be governed by perſons, or principles: and in proportion as he ſhews himſelf forward, or circumſpect, complaiſant or ſevere; in proportion as he is vain in his deportment, or generous in his ſentiments; in ſhort, in proportion as he is intimidated, or unmoved by airs of greatneſs, the courtiers approach, love, and deſpiſe him; or keep at a diſtance, hate, and eſteem him: a miniſter has to make his choice of theſe two parts, and if his ſoul is elevated, and he ſets a value on the diſcharge of his duties, he will not be long in ſuſpenſe on what to determine.

Ah! how earneſtly I wiſh in this place to make ſome exceptions! How rejoiced I ſhould be, to be allowed to name you, who do honour to the court by your virtues! You, whoſe ſouls congenial to your high births, render you the protectors and friends of thoſe you eſteem, and who generouſly inflamed with the love of public good, connect yourſelves with thoſe who labour for it! Know yourſelves, at

at leaſt, by theſe features, and the veneration which alone has dictated theſe few lines.

It is not ſufficient for a miniſter of the finances to prefer his duties to the calculations of his own intereſt: he muſt likewiſe do honour to his principles by making an open avowal of them; as a public man he muſt renounce all connection with himſelf, conſidered as a private individual; for that connection almoſt always debaſes the miniſter, without ſerving the man, There is more eſpecially, a ſort of lying weakneſs, the examples of which are too numerous; it conſiſts of promiſing powerful ſollicitors, to back their requeſts to the king, yet being determined not to do it, and by this diſſimulation endeavouring to attribute the refuſal ſolely to the will of the ſovereign.

The miniſter wants, by theſe means, to ſhelter himſelf from reproaches, that he has not the courage to bear; but he ſcarcely ever reaches the end he propoſed, even by that policy. It is rather by inſpiring

ſpiring perfect eſteem for himſelf, that he muſt be indemnified for the ill-humour which is excited on every occaſion, where he is forced to oppoſe private intereſt.

And as thoſe who meet with denials, are more eaſily hearkened to, when they may direct their complaints againſt the general character of the miniſter, they never fail to lay hold of whatever either formalities, or circumſtances preſent, that may intereſt thoſe who would otherwiſe be indifferent ſpectators; and nothing is better calculated to alienate an honeſt mind, than the appearance of deceit and hypocriſy.

Lastly, ſince I have undertaken a laborious taſk, ſufficient in itſelf to rouſe my courage, and to hinder me from ſacrificing uſeful and rational truths to perſonal conſiderations, I muſt aſſert, that it is requiſite, the conſciouſneſs of his duties ſhould enable the miniſter to withſtand, if neceſſary, even the influence of princes of the royal blood: his eyes muſt not be dazzled by their ſplendour, and when in

in the preſence of theſe princes, he muſt dare to defend with a reſpectful firmneſs, whatever he thinks juſt and reaſonable.

I FIND, in the memorials that I compoſed, to give the king an account of his affairs, two paragraphs which appear to me, to contain part of my ſentiments on that ſubject; and notwithſtanding the negligence that is inſeparable from works ſo multiplied, and rapidly compoſed in the hurry of affairs, I think it proper, on this occaſion, to tranſcribe literally, what was adreſſed to the king himſelf.

I FIND the following paſſages contained in a memorial on ſome orderly, and oeconomical arrangements.

"I HAVE cauſed to be remitted to "the royal exchequer, an infinite quan- "tity of ſums in arrear, and almoſt for- "gotten. In ſhort each individual under "me, is now animated by the ſame ſpi- "rit, ſo that a competition ſubſiſts between "them, to diſcover ſomething forgotten, "or wrong, in order to make me ac-

"quaint-

" quainted with it, and to remedy it. " Moreover, in the department of the fin- " ances, there is no longer any partiality " or any favours granted; theſe are the " means by which a miniſter of the fin- " ances may continually make himſelf " friends, at the expence of your Ma- " jeſty's intereſts. The great, and even, " if I may be allowed to ſay it, the " Princes of your blood, no longer en- " tertain the hopes to obtain by their aſ- " cendancy, and by the ſplendour of their " rank and birth, thoſe favours to which " your Majeſty's miniſters formerly too " much ſmoothed the way; and, I cannot " too ſtrongly repreſent to your Majeſty, " on this occaſion, that this is the quar- " ter from which the reports of your " miniſters, and comptrollers of the fin- " ances, ought always to be moſt ſuſ- " pected by your Majeſty, and to require " your particular inſpection.

" A PRIVATE individual muſt be very " deeply penetrated with the conſciouſneſs " of his duty to be enabled to reſiſt the " recommendations, and even the ſolici-

" tations

" tations of a prince of the blood. He is
" entirely overcome by ſuch applications,
" and as your Majeſty cannot keep an ac-
" count of all the denials, and rejections
" he makes, becauſe they are moſtly un-
" known to you; it will rarely be found
" that he is willing to ſacrifice to the in-
" terior conſciouſneſs of his obligation
" alone, the good-will of princes, who
" approach neareſt to your Majeſty's per-
" ſon: conſequently, he too often deter-
" mines to preſent to his ſovereign, as a
" juſt demand, what he diſapproves of,
" in the bottom of his heart, and thus
" it is, that a political courtier poſſeſſes
" the art to conceal himſelf under an
" honourable maſk."

In another memorial where I argued againſt a demand made by the princes, relative to a nomination of Receivers General in the King's domains ſettled on them, the diſcuſſion of that object led me to a general reflection which I preſented in the following manner.

" With-

" WITHOUT examining on what mo-
" tives, that which was refuſed under
" one miniſtry was granted under another,
" I ſhall obſerve in general, that a number
" of laws, or proclamations of the council,
" required by the advice of the princes
" of the blood, and afterwards cited as
" precedents, are not always a proof of
" the juſtice of privileges that are under
" diſcuſſion, in conſequence of a thorough
" examination: I might boldly appeal,
" for the truth of this, to the teſtimony
" of thoſe who were intruſted by the
" princes, with the care of negotiating
" with the miniſters; and who are well
" acquainted with the proper time to
" make their applications, and the means
" of ſucceeding in them.

THIS is a truth on which I cannot too much recommend it to your Majeſty, to " fix your attention, becauſe its conſequ-
" ences were always very important, and
" may become ſtill more ſo, in future.
" A miniſter of the finances, or of any
" other department does not often with-
" ſtand the aſcendancy of the princes of

" the royal blood, who perſonally ad-
" dreſs themſelves to him. Fear, ambi-
" tion, every thing impels him to be a-
" greeable to them. It is ſoon experi-
" enced, that they know and underſtand
" all the particulars of finances that con-
" cern themſelves, whilſt the merit the
" miniſter might acquire in his ſovereign's
" eyes, by a continual defence of his
" rights, is loſt in the immenſity of ob-
" jects that intereſt him, and whilſt it is
" beſides, ſo eaſy to conceal the ſacrifices
" that are made of his intereſts, or to
" attribute them to laudable motives. It
" is, however, from the effect of theſe
" moral conſiderations, that the demeſnes
" of the princes royal have increaſed and
" will ſtill increaſe, and the reflections
" made on this ſubject, by a weak and
" tranſient individual like me, will not
" prevent it; but it is a duty I owe to
" your Majeſty, to lay open the truth re-
" ſpecting ſuch ſubjects, as you have per-
" mitted me to take that liberty."

I SHALL not proceed farther in theſe re-flections; I am even conſcious that on ſo

delicate a ſubject, it was neceſſary for me to be heard with indulgence by the King, to be aſſured, that I ſaid nothing that could be wrongly interpreted.

CHAP. XIV.

ON THE PLACES THAT ENNOBLE THEIR POSSESSORS.

IT did not ſeem a matter of indifference to me, to aſcertain the quantity of places in France, that tranſmit nobility to the poſterity of the poſſeſſors, either from the inſtant they are inveſted with them, or at the ſecond, or third generation; or laſtly, when the poſſeſſors have enjoyed them a certain number of years. The number of theſe places amounts to above four thouſand, and the following enumeration I believe, is exact.

EIGHTY

EIGHTY places of maſters of requeſts.

ONE thouſand places, or thereabouts, in the various Parliaments, excluſive of thoſe poſſeſſed by eccleſiaſtical counſellors.

NINE hundred places, or thereabouts, in the impreſt offices, and courts of aids.

SEVENTY in the great council.

THIRTY in the court of the mint.

TWENTY in the provincial council of Artois.

EIGHTY in the chatelet in Paris, (a court of judicature.

SEVEN hundred and forty in the financial offices.

FIFTY places of great bailiffs, ſeneſchals, governors, and military Lieutenants-General.

NINE hundred places of ſecretaries to the King.

LASTLY, We may fix at about two hundred, the places under commiſſion at the parliament of Nancy, and the ſupreme council of Alſace, ſeveral offices of the ſecond order in the council, and in the chancery, thoſe of the tribunals of the marble table, having juriſdiction over the foreſts and rivers in the kingdom, and ſome others.

AND yet we muſt obſerve, that among all theſe various poſts, there are a great number, which in fact are not the ſources of a new nobility; for ſince the kingdom abounds with them, ſeveral ſupreme courts make a difficulty to admit among themſelves the families of citizens unleſs they have acquired this little illuſtration beforehand.

IN general, the leaſt honorary and the leaſt uſeful places, are thoſe that moſt multiply the nobility, becauſe as ſoon as they have been poſſeſſed during the time neceſſary to be able to tranſmit to poſteri-

ty

ty the privileges attached to them, it is uſual to endeavour to diſpoſe of them.

AMONG the places of this laſt ſort, thoſe of ſecretaries to the King, and ſome others equally depending on the court of chancery, are more eſpecially remarked; and although their functions collectively taken, require only a moderate ſhare of labour, the number of theſe places amounts to nearly one thouſand. It was the want of money in calamitous times that gave birth to ſo many uſeleſs offices: under ſuch circumſtances, promiſes were no longer relied on; a high rate of intereſt no longer tempted the monied men; reſources were looked for in the ſale of privileges: and to give colouring to that conceſſion, they invented functions which were feigned to be looked on as neceſſary, and the moſt precious prerogative in a monarchial ſtate, was attached to the poſſeſſion of theſe places.

BOTH policy and ſound reaſon oppoſe ſuch inſtitutions: for a continual ſource of new nobility intirely changes the idea

that ought to be entertained of that diſtinction; and the increaſe of the number of perſons who are exempted from paying the taxes, becomes a real prejudice to the reſt of the nation.

THESE conſiderations are too ſenſible to oblige me to dwell on them; but there is another which is leſs taken notice of, but which ſeems to me to merit the moſt ſerious attention.

THE multiplicity of offices that ennoble their poſſeſſors, and may be acquired for money, maintain a ſpirit of vanity, which engages men to abandon the trading and manufacturing branches, in the very moment when theſe eſtabliſhments might be extended by the increaſe of the capitals of the owners; a valuable period, at which they are more able than ever, to make their labours, and their induſtry contribute to the increaſe of the proſperity of the ſtate; for then it is, that merchants may be ſatisfied with a lower rate of intereſt; they may facilitate the export trade by making advances; they may hazard more

more, and open to commerce, channels till then unknown, by new enterprizes.

I AM therefore of opinion, that every public arrangement that increaſes, or is favourable to thoſe vanities that are foreign to the condition of the various claſſes of citizens, is contrary to ſound policy.

I DO not heſitate to ſay, that theſe arrangements put a ſtop in France, to the intire diſplay of the ſtrength and genius of commerce, and are among the principal cauſes of the ſuperiority in ſeveral branches of trade, of thoſe nations where the diſtinctions of condition are leſs ſenſible and where the pretenſions that reſult from theſe diſtinctions, are not a continual object of concern.

THESE diverſe reflections ſeem to indicate that one of the beſt uſes public credit could be put to in times of peace, would be, to borrow the ſums neceſſary to reimburſe ſucceſſively all the uſeleſs places that tranſmit hereditary nobility ; but abuſive practices of a long date, in the moral con-

conſtitution, like diſeaſes in the phyſical, rarely admit too active remedies, without being expoſed to ſome inconveniencies. Nothing ſeems leſs rational than to make an object of traffic of diſtinctions and privileges: but when there are ſo many citizens ennobled by places bought by themſelves, or their anceſtors, it is not ſo ſimple a reform as might be imagined, to deprive all of a ſudden, the reſt of the nation, of the hopes of acquiring the ſame advantages, which a great number of their equals have procured to themſelves by the ſole merit of having an eaſy fortune. If this obſervation ought to deter government from making a reform in this abuſive practice, which increaſes daily, it may at leaſt lead us to think that in order to mitigate the rigour of ſuch an arrangement, it would be proper to attach more honour to the uſeful profeſſions, which would no longer have it in their power to arrive at nobility by means of their fortune. It would at the ſame time be neceſſary to endeavour to leſſen a little the numerous prerogatives enjoyed by one ſingle claſs of ſociety; their advantages appear to be

out

out of all proportion, when we compare ſuch diſtinctions with the original title to nobility purchaſed for money by a prodigious number of families; thus it may be proper to examine, if that lately adopted inſtitution is right, by which two, or three degrees of nobility are required of thoſe who deſire to be admitted as officers, in the land or ſea ſervice; undoubtedly this is not too much, for the honour of the French nobility, whoſe titles would otherwiſe be loſt in the obſcurity of former times; and therefore, the above condition bears hard only on citizens honourable by their ſentiments, whilſt it is favourable to thoſe whoſe fortunes have been made in the courſe of a century.

It would alſo be requiſite, in compliance with the ſame principles, to endeavour to mitigate thoſe exceptions which even in the aſſeſſment of the taxes make a diſtinction in favour of perſons and conditions.

How is it poſſible to avoid a continual ſource of rancour, when the lateſt ennobled in-

individual enjoys the ſame privileges as the moſt ancient noble families? Let me be allowed to preſent this under a more general view: ſimple reaſon does not indicate that thoſe who enjoy the greateſt part of the advantages of the ſocial compact, ſhould bear the leaſt ſhare of the public burdens: military ſervice, which formerly was among the burdens of a peculiar claſs of citizens, being now an object of utility, favour and preference, the firſt cauſes of the privileges attached to that profeſſion are ſenſibly changed: but the ancient opinions are as ſtrong as ever; and I ſhould not adviſe a violation of pretenſions conſecrated by length of time: but prudent means, that are not liable to be complained of, ought nevertheleſs to be employed to attain a rational end. One of the motives that cauſes exemptions to be ſo highly valued, is the regularity of ſome ſorts of impoſts: ſuch are for example, the land-tax, exigible perſonal ſervices, the obligation of quartering ſoldiers, and others: it would be a fooliſh undertaking to pretend to change theſe ideas, and to aſſeſs to theſe charges, each claſs of citi-

zens

zens indiſcriminately; but in proportion as theſe taxes ſhould be modified, the difficulties would diſappear. Thus the land-tax is attended with a kind of diſgrace in that part of the kingdom where it ſerves to deſign the inferiority of the ſtation of the contributors; whilſt the ſame tax mortifies no perſon, in the province where it ſhews only the difference between various landed properties; and thus it is, that the expences of the public communications may be aſſeſſed on that branch of the revenue, without hurting the pride of any contributary. Beſides, ſuppoſing for a moment, that the ſovereign has it in his power to aboliſh ſome taxes, could any well founded complaints be made, if that alleviation was preferably applied towards equaliſing the burdens of the various claſſes of contributaries? Complaints are never made againſt the nature of a benefit.

LASTLY, we muſt not loſe ſight of one great general idea. Circumſtances have rendered moſt ſtates in Europe either adapted to war, or to commerce, and the ſpirit

ſpirit of their governments muſt alſo be thereto adapted. France, on the contrary, is obliged to follow both profeſſions: its monarchial conſtitution maintains the idea of nobility and of military ſervice: whilſt the nature of its ſoil, the ſkill of its inhabitants, and the ſituation of the kingdom, offer the idea of commerce and of riches; in the combination of theſe different conſiderations, conſiſts its power; they muſt therefore be diſcreetly managed; and at the ſame time that thoſe opinions which excite honour and courage are cheriſhed, thoſe which engage men in uſeful occupations muſt not be diſcouraged; and as the ſentiments of ſelf-love and of vanity, by which all men are actuated, are in France a ſtill more powerful motive than elſewhere, they ought not to be imprudently directed ſo as to give a diſlike to neceſſary profeſſions, and thereby augment the pride of thoſe who are already ſo much favoured. It is more eſpecially in great manufacturing towns, and thoſe ſea ports which carry on a great trade, that the ſatisfaction and conſideration of merchants ought to be attended to. Thus, to cite one ſingle

ex-

example ; inſtead of looking on the privilege that the city of Lyons enjoys of guarding itſelf, as a troubleſome right, a real ſtateſman will politically maintain that conſtitution which diſpenſes with the military and their pretenſions, in the heart of a city' rendered very flouriſhing by the application of its inhabitants to commerce. It would even be deſirable, that no ſupreme court exiſted in ſuch cities; for the diſtinctions of rank they introduce, are indirectly prejudicial to the reſpect due to merchants, and imperceptibly inſpire them with another kind of ambition. At this moment, there is in France a great law ſuit depending, whoſe origin was owing to different ſeats being aſſigned in the theatre at Bourdeaux, to the Aldermen belonging to the order of nobility, and the Aldermen of the order of the commonalty. Let a good public miniſter conſider whether ſuch cuſtoms ought to exiſt in a town, the commerce of which is a ſource of wealth for the kingdom of France: ſuch diſtinctions, when they are not juſt, are perhaps the cauſes of greater poli-

political miſchiefs than many unſkilful laws.

THE above reflections are not foreign to the ſubject I meant to treat in this chapter: their ſpirit is perfectly connected with it; and another proof may be inferred from them, of the obligation under which government lies to leave open the paths that lead to the acquiſition of nobility, if, in caſe of ſhutting them up, it does not take greater care than ever, to preſerve the regard due to the utility and importance of the profeſſions of the other claſſes of ſociety. It is undoubtedly to be wiſhed, that nobility had never been purchaſed for money; but when ſuch a cuſtom has exiſted for a long time; when a kind of connection is eſtabliſhed, between the claſſes of ſociety, that are nearly equal to each other by their education and knowledge; if it is broken off, it muſt be done with great diſcretion, and at the ſame time that the changes of rank are rendered more difficult, all ſenſible motives for envy muſt be mitigated. Some perſons will perhaps find ſo much circumſpection intirely uſe-

leſs; they will find that overment would have too much to do, if it was to weigh continually in an exact balance, all the rights, or pretenſions of each claſs of ſociety; and be anxious about conciliating and uniting together ſo many different objects; undoubtedly, ſuch cares render the ſcience of adminiſtration difficult: but the intereſt of a whole nation, the juſtice due to all the claſſes whereof it conſiſts, are not ſuch a trifling object, as to allow of negligence in thoſe whoſe duty it is to attend to them; the taſk is not to be accompliſhed without trouble, but its end is ſo generous, its various relations are ſo great, that they ought at leaſt to apply their whole abilities in the purſuit of it.

CHAP. XV.

ON ASYLUMS FOR MENDICITY.

AFTER treating of luxury, fortune, grandeur, and the vanity of mankind, one is naturally induced to pay ſome attention to the calamities of the poor. The mind is pleaſed with ſuch a contraſt, when it enjoys the calm of meditation: but it is differently bent, when launched out in the midſt of the vanities of the world: for then, theſe calamities often ſurround us and preſs upon us, without our being concerned at them; and thus it is only in thoſe moments when fortune is adverſe, that we reflect on miſery: yet, wretchedneſs exiſts without interruption, and every inſtant, oppreſſes an immenſe part of the nation

nation. Let us lift up our eyes for a while, and conſider this ſorrowful ſpectacle.

UNFORTUNATELY, poverty is among the circumſtances inſeparable from communities: there will always exiſt a race of men expoſed to indigence; becauſe, all thoſe who are born without fortunes, and whoſe parents being as wretched as themſelves, are not able to give them that primary education, which is the ſtamina of moſt talents, have no other reſource but manual labour; and it is only by devoting their ſtrength to the ſervice of others, that they can obtain that daily ſubſiſtence which the ſubdiviſion of property has not aſſured to them; but in a populous and extenſive country, the inhabitants who have no other means of livelihood, but that precarious reſource, are ſo numerous, and each of them ſo overpowered by the preſſing exigences of life, that the poſſeſſors of the produce of the earth readily obtain common labour, for wages that will ſcarcely furniſh the neceſſaries of life. And yet, thoſe whoſe whole fortune conſiſts in ſuch ſcanty ſalaries, do not live ſingle, a wife

and children increaſe the ſum of their wants; and, if in that ſituation, the head of the family falls ſick, if the means of labour on which he founded the hopes of ſubſiſtence are long interrupted; in ſhort, if the ſlighteſt improvidence aggravates his ordinary diſtreſs, then, he is obliged to look for reſources in the beneficence of others. How compaſſionate to theſe wretched objects, ought not that privileged claſs of mortals to be, who come into the world ſurrounded, as it were, with infallible reſources, by inheritance! children of the ſame common parent, nature, what an immenſe diſtance ſocial legiſlation has placed between them! Undoubtedly, it was indiſpenſably neceſſary to regulate the diviſion of property, and the ſucceſſion of inheritance; without that conſtant and inviolable order, ſociety would have been liable to continual convulſions, and the law of the ſtrongeſt would have continually prevailed; but wealthy people ſcarcely ever extend their thoughts ſo far as to reflect on the primary ſource of their rights, and they enjoy as perſonal attributes, thoſe advantages for which they

are

are indebted, not to the ſuperiority of their nature, but to the convention of men. Every thing now yields to the empire of authority, conſecreated by a ſucceſſion of ages; an innumerable quantity of the inhabitants of the earth are forced to ſubmit to its laws, and wait in ſilence till their ſervices are wanted by the diſtributors of their labour. It behoves government, the interpreter and depoſitary of ſocial harmony, to do all that order and juſtice will admit to be done, for that numerous claſs diſinherited by its laws: it ought to employ with diligence all the means that are left to mitigate the rigour of thoſe antient conventions, and to relieve theſe who may want protection againſt the very laws themſelves; then, after enforcing thoſe ſtatutes that fix the reſpective rights of each citizen, adminiſtration will know how to explain likewiſe, the duties of ſociety towards objects of miſery: that great and beneficent idea will be its guide in all its actions: it will be preſent to its mind, in the aſſeſſment of the taxes, in the eſtabliſhment of public works, in the diſtribution of charit-

able funds, and in ſhort, in all the arrangements that are proper to prevent poverty, and mendicity its uſual attendant.

ALAS! how often might not the beggar reproach authority when it wants to confine him. I beg alms to-day, might the unhappy object ſay, but for theſe five days I have laboured without any reward, to repair the public roads; but a tax-gatherer has expoſed to ſale the little I had for my land-tax; another proſecuted me for my ſalt duty; under an uncertainty concerning my rights of exemption, I exhauſted my means in a judiciary defence; and ſcarce a moment ſince, I preſented myſelf at the door of a rich land-proprietor to aſk for employment; but was anſwered, he did not want my ſervices. Certainly ſuch a diſcourſe, would be an intereſting excuſe, and even a juſt apology, coming from a perſon who ſhould be arreſted as a vagabond.

UNDOUBTEDLY, government in the firſt arrangements it made to put a ſtop to the diſorders occaſioned by begging, muſt have been

been deſirous to be indulgent to beggars of the above deſcription: but it is very difficult always to diſtinguiſh in time, the man who deſerves to be pitied, from him who begs from a ſpirit of idleneſs, and the dread of labour: and if it be true, that above fifty thouſand beggars were arreſted in one year, when in 1767, that branch of adminiſtation was more peculiarly attended to; it is alſo very probable, that ſeveral unfortunate errors were committed, and ſeveral unhappy objects ſeverely treated: this apprehenſion of mine is but too well founded; as the places deſtined to contain ſo many priſoners, were not ſufficently ſpacious, and as thoſe precautions, which time has pointed out as neceſſary, had not as yet been taken. The attention of adminiſtration to that branch of the public police, had been rouſed both by the diſorders occaſioned by a multiplicity of vagabonds, and by the commiſeration, and uneaſineſs excited by a croud of importunate beggars. We cannot forbear obſerving, on this occaſion, that eſtabliſhments of beneficence and public order, have often been more owing to the troubleſome

ſome importunities of the poor, than to a continual and general anxiety, or to a prudent foreſight, on the part of government.

We may ſtill ſee in the letters patent for the eſtabliſhment of the general hoſpitals at Paris, that one of the motives of this inſtitution was the great number of beggars that filled the ſtreets.

Undoubtedly, every uſeful arrangement ought to be enjoyed with gratitude, even though it were entirely due to the ſentiment excited by thoſe diſorders or calamities, which government cannot forbear to notice; but that well founded compaſſion which attends unknown misfortune, and is occupied in preventing it; thoſe general ideas which give a foreknowledge of all the unavoidable conſequences of the overburden of the taxes, the decreaſe of commerce, and the rigorous exerciſe of the right of property; in ſhort, all theſe great branches of adminiſtration when properly executed, have a better right to the homage of mankind.

From

FROM the laſt calculations made towards the end of my adminiſtration, I eſtimate the totality of beggars uſually ſhut up in the different work-houſes of the kingdom, at between ſix and ſeven thouſand.

THESE work-houſes are thirty-three in number: good order and humanity are lately much increaſed in them: and though ſeveral of theſe houſes are ſtill ſuſceptible of great improvement, ſome of them are kept in a very proper manner. Various kinds of labour have been eſtabliſhed for both ſexes: thoſe vagabonds who apply themſelves with aſſiduity and regularity to theſe occupations, are ſooner liberated, and thoſe who are brought to beggary by accidental cauſes, or who may find any relief in their reſpective pariſhes are not kept under confinement. I was deſirous to give in a model of an aſylum for beggars, and of a work-houſe, and to inſtitute a charitable hoſpital on an enlarged ſcale, and a plan ſimilar to the hoſpital for the ſick which I had eſtabliſhed. I turned my views to the generality of Soiſ-

Soiſſons, adjacent to Paris; there I could be ſeconded by an Intendant zealous for the public good, and by the good underſtanding and love of order, of an eccleſiaſtic, who had already given proofs of a diſpoſition peculiarly adapted to that kind of adminiſtration. My views have been perfectly well ſeconded, as may be perceived in the public accounts that have been given of the inſtitution. Publications of this kind, not only ſerve for general inſtruction, but alſo become a motive of encouragement to the particular directors: the honour that proceeds from them is, one of the moſt powerful ſprings of emulation: this ſpecies of reward coſts nothing to the ſtate, and even thoſe who beſtow it, grow better for it; for ſentiments of honeſty ſeem to participate of the eſſence of that primary natural element, whoſe ſtrength is increaſed by its own activity, and which becomes more pure and more ardent, from the motion with which it is impreſſed.

GOVERNMENT cannot inſiſt too much, in the management of aſylums for the poor, on that ſpirit of prudence and humanity which

which knows how to unite the maintenance of order with a ſentiment of indulgence and commiſeration. It is alſo neceſſary to keep a watchful eye over the body of the maréchauſſeé, in order to prevent as much as poſſible, the abuſive practices and errors that are inſeparable from the authority of the Provoſts Marſhall.

In the number of thoſe beggars who are arreſted and thrown into priſon, how many have juſt reaſon to complain of ſome miſtake, or ſome arbitrary act! theſe are the inconveniences attached to this kind of juriſdiction: they would appear inſupportable in England, where nothing can be done, but under the ſanction of the laws, and where the moſt inconſiderable citizen is well acquainted with the full extent of his conſtitutional rights, but in France, the authority of the police is more ample, and cuſtom, the nature of the government, the immenſe diſtance that exiſts between the pooreſt claſs, and the other orders of ſociety, in ſhort, every thing helps to divert the public attention from the careleſs manner in which authority

thority may be exerciſed over the multitude; and if it were not for the humanity and mildneſs that characterize the French nation, and the ſpirit of this age, the ſubjects of theſe obſervations would afford a continual ſource of ſorrow for all thoſe who are moved with compaſſion at the ſight of a yoke from which they are themſelves liberated. In the midſt of theſe reflections it gives one pain to ſee the Britiſh nation ſuffer the bleſſings of her conſtitution to be inſulted with impunity, by not remedying the frequency of robberies committed on the highways which it takes no pains to ſuppreſs, and which are exceſſes unknown in thoſe countries where the police has more power and activity.

HOWEVER, the inconveniencies of begging, the abuſive practices inſeparable from the methods taken by the police to oppoſe this diſorder; and the bad conſequences of an exceſſive toleration; undoubtedly all tend to demonſtrate, that the greateſt good that could be done, would be to ſtop the reſources of mendicity,

by

by keeping a ſtrict watch over the firſt appearances of wretchedneſs. It would be wrong to accuſe the government of France of a want of anxiety and foreſight on that ſubject: there are public works in each province, during the dead ſeaſons of the year: there are, as we ſhall ſoon clearly ſhew, a conſiderable number of aſylums for the ſick and infirm: in all calamities, ſuch as fires, ſcarcity of grain, and epidemical diſtempers, the ſovereign orders aſſiſtance to be diſtributed every where; moſt biſhops, or great eccleſiaſtical incumbents obliged to be reſident, and ſeveral monaſteries of great property, employ a part of their income in giving work to the poor, or in aſſiſting them. Other charitable inſtitutions, in almoſt every pariſh, have a ſmall fund deſtined to aſſiſt the neceſſitous; and if the great land-proprietors were to reſide longer on their eſtates, the reſources of that kind would ſtill be greater. In ſhort, if the perfection that ought to be ſought, was to be attained by the ſacrifice on the part of the ſovereign of greater ſums of money, it might in peaceful times, be confidently

expected from the juſtice and humanity of the monarch who fills the throne.

If the various articles I have juſt pointed out, and all that proceeds from the private charity of humane perſons, was to be eſtimated, it would, undoubtedly be found, that the money annually deſtined to the alleviation of misfortune, amounts in France, to a very conſiderable ſum. Much has been wrote on mendicity within a ſhort ſpace of time; but all ſpeculative inquiries on that ſubject have the ſame idea in view: they propoſe a ſimple known method, and already partly put in practice: that is, the eſtabliſhment of public work-houſes, adapted to the different ſexes, and ages; which being always open ſhould continually offer wages to thoſe who ſhould want employment; but every where, there are people who are neceſſitous at intervals, theſe work-houſes could not be multiplied in proportion; and thoſe occupations that neither require education, nor apprenticeſhip, and which may be begun and left at pleaſure, are limited in their number; beſides, though the manual labours

bours that reſult from them, are uſeful and deſtined for conſumption, all thoſe that are executed in work-houſes are ſo much taken from the free induſtry of other citizens. It is a difficult matter to eſtabliſh proper regularity in the movements of too great a multiplicity of ſprings; more eſpecially if they are in continual friction with the main ſpring; and that which theory does not indicate, is the real impoſſibility under which government labours, to accompliſh every object of an univerſal adminiſtration, compoſed of an infinite number of details, all of them requiring certain rules appropriated to every circumſtance, and to every place. The difficulties would, however, diſappear, or might be diminiſhed, by the aſſiſtance of ſecondary adminiſtrations, which would in ſome meaſure, have a fraternal inſpection over the wants of the people in each province; which being on the ſpot, would know what is neceſſary in one place, and what may be diſpenſed with in another, and would thus prevent, by a permanent attention, the diſcouragement government often experiences, from ſubſiſting

abuſes, from oppoſition, and from the uncertainty of ſucceſs in remedying them. If I was to form a wiſh on ſo intereſting a ſubject; if I was to conceive an idea proper to come as near as poſſible to that political perfection, which it is ſo difficult to attain, I would repreſent to myſelf a provincial adminiſtration, which after having eſtabliſhed itſelf on a permanent footing, and turned its firſt thoughts to leſſening the burden of the taxes, either by rational modifications, or a prudent aſſeſſment, ſhould then direct its attention to each pariſh, ſhould be exactly acquainted with its reſources and its wants, and ſhould know how to diſtribute aſſiſtance, labour and encouragement in a due proportion.

I SHOULD ſee theſe adminiſtrations, informing themſelves before-hand by general calculations, and applying that information to particular inquiries. I ſhould ſee them daily acquiring a right to the confidence of the ſovereign, ſucceſſively collecting and uniting for the ſame purpoſes that part of the produce of the taxes which

which is deſtined to be diſtributed to the needy, or to afford them work in hard ſeaſons, alſo the incomes of hoſpitals, the reſources that may be expected from the charities which the clergy are obliged to beſtow, and laſtly, the voluntary offerings of thoſe who would indulge themſelves in the exerciſe of their generoſity, were they to be acquainted with prudent people to diſtribute it. I ſhould behold the ſame adminiſtrations forming a collective maſs of public benevolence out of ſo many articles, and anxious that no inhabitants of any province, whoſe oeconomical intereſts ſhould have been intruſted to their care, might juſtly attribute its misfortune to public neglect. In ſhort, I ſhould ſee them, become ſecurities as it were, not of general eaſe, for that is a chimerical idea; but of an exemption from thoſe evils which prudent precautions may prevent.

Thus it is that I very often refer a great number of advantages to one ſingle, well conducted inſtitution: if this is an error, it is, at leaſt, the only one that en-

courages hope: the abilities of a miniſter of the finances are by no means equal to the attention required by the ſeveral branches of the adminiſtration of which he has the inſpection; and if he is deſirous that all orders ſhould proceed from his own cloſet, every thing will be imperfectly executed; and even the good that he may do, will be as tranſitory as himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

INQUIRIES RELATIVE TO THE HOSPITALS IN THE KINGDOM.

THESE inquiries are among the number of thoſe that ought to excite the concern and curioſity of a miniſter of the finances; but time alone, and the continuation of the ſame reſearches, can aſſure the perfect exactneſs of the reſult I am about to offer in this place.

THERE are above ſeven hundred hoſpitals in the kingdom, and about an hundred foundations, with three or four beds in each, eſtabliſhed by private individuals.

I ESTIMATE the number of poor that habitually find an aſylum, or ſome aſſiſtance in theſe different foundations, at from an hundred, to one hundred and ten thouſand; and the following is nearly the diviſion of the principal claſſes.

FORTY thouſand infirm, or poor of an advanced age, and deemed incapable to work for their livelihood.

TWENTY-five thouſand ſick perſons.

FORTY thouſand foundlings, the greateſt part of whom are boarded out in the country.

IT will be readily conceived, that if ſuch is nearly the quantity of individuals who are continually taken care of, or aſſiſted, a much greater number muſt, in the courſe of the year, participate of theſe acts of beneficence, becauſe death, or a perfect cure, occaſion continual vacancies, and freſh objects of charity are conſtantly relieved.

THE

THE revenues of the hoſpitals conſiſt in the produce of the eſtates granted by the founders, in lands, houſes, or quit-rents; in duties levied for their profit on articles of conſumption, by the King's authority, in yearly ſums of money they draw from the royal exchequer, or that are aſſigned on other depoſits of the public money, and laſtly, in donations and charitable contributions. We have but very imperfect accounts of many of theſe objects. Proper perſons were employed during my miniſtry to put them together in a regular manner, and to annex what was diſcovered to be wanting, but this was a taſk which required great length of time.

HOWEVER, from ſeveral calculations, I ſhould be inclined to eſtimate the annual revenue, which all the hoſpitals in the kingdom have at their diſpoſal, at about eighteen, or twenty millions of livres, and nearly one fourth of that ſum belongs to the great hoſpital, and to the Hotel Dieu of Paris.

I HAVE not compriſed in the above enumeration, the hoſpitals appropriated to the relief of the army and the navy; their number is about ſeventy; the uſual quantity of ſick, is ſix thouſand.

I think I had adopted a proper method to increaſe the revenue of the hoſpitals, by engaging the King to authoriſe them to ſell their real eſtates, on condition they ſhould place the produce of the ſales in perpetual annuities payable by the King, the provincial ſtates, or the clergy: theſe eſtabliſhments would by that method have received a higher rate of intereſt, and inſtead of the very complicated management of their poſſeſſions, they would have had a very ſimple method of receiving their income: all theſe motives were explained in the law promulgated on that ſubject: but as the King, deſirous to reſpect the right of property, and in order not to excite any diffidence, had not adopted coercive meaſures, his intentions were far from being ſeconded with the activity and zeal he wiſhed to inſpire.

THE

THE ſecond, and the moſt efficacious of all methods, to increaſe the reſources of the hoſpitals, is order and oeconomy. Government can only have an influence, by means of general arrangements, on the attention and care of private adminiſtrations, as well as every other branch that requires a multiplicity of minute particulars; but it ought to ſhow a concern which extends to every thing, and the impreſſion of which is always more or leſs felt.

IF we conſider only the character and the ſtation of the principal directors of the great hoſpitals of the kingdom, we cannot form a wiſh tending to improve the rule of their adminiſtration; but we cannot forbear to think otherwiſe, when we fix our attention on the conſtitutive form of theſe eſtabliſhments.

THE adminiſtrators of the general hoſpital of Paris are the Archbiſhop, the firſt Preſident, and Attorney General of the Parliament, the firſt Preſident of the Impreſt Court, and Court of Aids, the Lieutenant

of the Police, the Provoſt of the Shopkeepers, and laſtly, ten perſons choſen from the moſt reſpectable claſſes of the citizens, who exerciſe their functions for life, unleſs they voluntarily reſign. Theſe ten adminiſtrators tranſact the affairs of the hoſpital, and take on themſelves the diverſe branches of management: they hold private aſſemblies among themſelves, and are in general of a premeditated and unanimous opinion. By theſe means, even although the other heads of that adminiſtration were to have a permanent opinion on the diverſe arrangements that are ſubmitted to a general deliberation, that opinion not being ſupported by a plurality of voices, could never prevail. We may therefore perceive that their being preſent at theſe aſſemblies, does not produce the effect that ought reaſonably to be expected from their ſuperior ſtations; and for this reaſon, the conſtitution of that adminiſtration has always appeared to me to be better adapted to protect its fundamental principles againſt any innovation, than to operate the greateſt attainable good.

THE perpetual ſtability of the ſecondary adminiſtrators, and the ſharing between them the different departments, renders each of them entirely deſpotic in the branch allotted him, and mutual regard for each other ſtrengthens their authority. All theſe combinations muſt neceſſarily prove obſtacles to every plan of reform, and their inconveniences would have been felt in a much more ſtriking manner, if the honeſty of the greateſt part of the members of that adminiſtation had not often balanced the effects of ſuch an inſtitution.

THE direction of the hoſpital of Lyons, being regulated, in a different manner, is liable to defects of another kind: the adminiſtrators are changed at the end of two years: thus they cannot acquire a ſufficient knowledge to do any permanent good, or to undertake ſuch improvements as require a total alteration in the ſyſtem. But as theſe adminiſtrators are obliged to depoſit in the treaſury of the hoſpital, a conſiderable ſum of money for which they receive no intereſt, the generoſity of that ſacrifice, the gratuitous cares, and the good re-

reputation of thoſe who are choſen to exerciſe theſe functions, all theſe conſiderations have ſupported the antient cuſtoms, againſt the objections that may be juſtly made to them.

It is very difficult to adopt ſuch a conſtitution in the management of great hoſpitals, as will entirely prevent both negligence and abuſes: and when ſuch a deſign is propoſed to be carried into execution, the greateſt part of thoſe obſtacles to which all governments are liable, will be found to exiſt on a leſs ſcale. Thus if we fix our attention on the advantages that reſult from unanimity of thought, action, and will, we could wiſh theſe eſtabliſhments to be under the management of a ſingle perſon; but when we are to look for a man worthy of that confidence, or even for thoſe who may be capable to make ſuch a choice, we cannot long dwell upon that idea, and are forced to prefer a collective adminiſtration; but then, it ought to be modified in a manner moſt favourable to the ſpirit that it is important to inſpire. It appears to me, that a part

part of the inconveniences I have indicated would be avoided, if ſuch an adminiſtration was compoſed of ſeven perſons, five of whom ſhould be elected either by an aſſembly of the principal burgeſſes, or by the mayor and aldermen, or by the archbiſhop and firſt magiſtrates, according to the privileges, or the cuſtoms of each town. The ſervices of theſe five perſons, inveſted with an honourable title, ſhould be gratuitous; but they ſhould be authoriſed to chuſe two directors who ſhould have a fixed ſalary: theſe directors ſhould be preſent at all the aſſemblies of the adminiſtrators, and ſhould keep their places, as long as the former five ſhould be ſatisfied with their ſervices; but theſe laſt mentioned, ſhould be renewed every five years, by nominating a new one each year, inſtead of the oldeſt. Such a kind of inſtitution, or any other nearly ſimilar and conformable to that ſpirit, would render two perſons continual ſecurities for exactneſs in every particular; the adminiſtrators that would inſpect them, would be long enough in place to form a juſt opinion; and not long enough to have their zeal diminiſhed by

by habit; they would poſſeſs a plurality of voices ſufficient to be maſters of the directors, and at the ſame time, their number would be ſo circumſcribed that they ſhould feel themſelves reſponſible for the abuſes they might overlook through indifference: for it is the multiplicity of adminiſtrators, or their too rapid ſucceſſion to each other, that as it were diſſeminates their caution, and makes it appear to them as if they were not reſponſible. Laſtly, to maintain a continual emulation, it would be neceſſary to publiſh the account of the expences, and of the moſt important rules of management yearly.

Such are nearly the principles pointed out by reflection and experience: but the moſt zealous miniſter can only proceed with great caution to innovations of which he ſometimes alone feels the importance; whilſt to aſſure certain ſucceſs to theſe alterations, it would often be neceſſary that they ſhould be ſeconded both by the permanent reſolution of government, and by the concurrence of the intermediate bodies who

who have ſo many ways of defending ancient cuſtoms.

It was in conſequence of theſe obſervations, that to ſupply the tardineſs of the uſual means of reform, I thought it important to make choice of a perſon, who under the title of inſpector, might ſucceſſively make himſelf acquainted with the forms of management of the hoſpitals, and cauſe each private adminiſtration to adopt thoſe arrangements of order and oeconomy, the principles of which ſhould be approved of by government. Several very uſeful reforms reſulted from that plan: this was undoubtedly an advantage: but it can never be compared with the real good, of which the ſpirit itſelf of theſe inſtitutions becomes the conſervator.

Lastly, as of all the modes of public inſtruction, a model on a large ſcale is the moſt perſuaſive, and the moſt permanent, I propoſed to the King to found an hoſpital in the largeſt pariſh of Paris, to put that eſtabliſhment under the moſt prudent regulations, and to adopt all neceſſary means

means to come as near as poſſible to that perfection, which proceeds from an union of attention and oeconomy. That foundation was very ſucceſsful; and I think the King's intentions were as completely fulfilled as could be expected. That hoſpital is now compoſed of one hundred and twenty-eight beds: nothing that can be of real uſe to the ſick has been ſpared: nothing uſeleſs has been expended: this laſt attention is as charitable as the firſt, ſince it is by ſuch means only, that with a determined income (and all is limited that concerns the public money) a greater number of wretched objects can be aſſiſted. The above number of beds is ſufficient to receive eighteen hundred ſick, each year: and as no one is admitted through favour, nor through the influence of a recommendation, and the only right to introduction is a certificate of the utmoſt poverty ſigned by the pariſh miniſter, or one of his principal aſſiſtants, experience has ſhewn that the hoſpital under theſe regulations, is ſufficient for the exigences of the two pariſhes, that contain one ſeventh part of Paris. And yet, by a

ſtrict

ſtrict attendance to an exact order in the expences, a ſick perſon only coſt, during the firſt year 1779, the daily ſum of ſixteen ſous, ten deniers, or eight pence five-twelfths Engliſh.

In 1780, the ſame within a fraction.

In 1781, ſeventeen ſous, three deniers.

In 1782, ſeventeen ſous, one denier and a fraction.

In 1783, ſeventeen ſous, two deniers and a fraction.

The very great parity of theſe reſults, ſenſibly ſhews the regularity eſtabliſhed in all the different branches of the expences: the King ordered the accounts to be annually printed; and as they contain ſeveral inſtructive particulars, the interior adminiſtration of ſeveral charitable eſtabliſhments have already been reformed according to that plan: it is ſtill done every day, and two other ſimilar, but leſs conſiderable hoſpitals, have been eſtabliſhed in Paris, with

with the aſſiſtance of part of the income of the various pariſhes, and of ſome private charities.

In ſhort, ſeveral directors of hoſpitals in foreign countries, and ſome Sovereign Princes, have cauſed informations to be taken on the direction of that houſe: theſe informations were communicated with eagerneſs, in the ſame manner as the adminiſtrators of the hoſpital, had cauſed them to be taken in various places, for the purpoſe of improving the regulations of the houſe, by comparing them with thoſe that were already eſtabliſhed elſewhere: the love of humanity as well as the deſire of acquiring a fortune, may have its correſpondents and connections; and improvements of this nature, are as valuable at leaſt as any other.

One of the ſiſterhood of charity, equally zealous and intelligent, conſtantly preſides over the domeſtic affairs of the abovementioned hoſpital; and Mrs. Necker, aſſiſted by the miniſter of the pariſh of St. Sulpice has, hitherto directed that eſtabliſhment with

the moſt aſſiduous care. I cannot ſay that ſhe gloried in it, nor in the other eſtabliſhments of public charity that took up her attention: for purer motives than thoſe of glory were her counſellors on theſe occaſions: ſhe never could have given herſelf ſo much trouble merely for the ſake of praiſe; but her views were above mortal conſiderations, and that piety which animates beneficence, was her guide, and encouraged her. When we conceive a high idea of our duties, when we apply them to principles foreign to the vanities of the world, then, methinks, we approach to that degree of moral perfection towards which mankind ought to tend; but who can flatter himſelf to carry ſuch pure intentions about him, in the career of public good? I will be the firſt to humble myſelf before ſo much virtue. Is it juſtifiable, ſome perſons will ſay, to talk in that manner of another ſelf? What ſtrange language, and perhaps, how ridiculous? I am willing to run the hazard of it; for I cannot really ſay, what ſort of opinion would be neceſſary to indemnify me for the ſacrifice of this my moſt favourite

idea; and as to the ridicule with which I am threatened, it is not ſo eaſy as may be thought, to caſt it upon thoſe ſentiments that are rational, when they are openly and firmly avowed.

DURING my miniſtry, the King ordered, by Letters Patent regiſtered in Parliament, that for the future, the ſick in the Hotel-Dieu, who till then had been put ſometimes two, three, or even four in the ſame bed, ſhould be entirely ſeparated: the interior arrangements neceſſary for the execution of that laudable plan, have been continued ever ſince: two large halls will very ſoon be in readineſs, and then the King's beneficent intentions will begin to take place. The funds aſſigned to that expence, have been faithfully adminiſtered under the direction of a magiſtrate animated with zeal, and a deſire to do good: theſe funds proceed from a voluntary gift made by the financial companies, inſtead of the *douceur* they were accuſtomed to preſent to the miniſter of the finances, and alſo, from a conſiderable gift made to me by the late Archbiſhop of Paris, to be applied to

any charitable purpoſe I ſhould think proper, and which ſhould be approved of by the King. I mention this circumſtance in order to pay to the memory of that virtuous prelate, the tribute of reſpect and gratitude, which I preſume to offer to his manes, in the name of every feeling and charitable mind. The notorial act which he abſolutely inſiſted ſhould be made to me on that occaſion, if ſet in contraſt with our different religions, and the tenaciouſneſs of his opinions in that reſpect, may, perhaps be reckoned a very ſingular fact, and worthy of record.

We find now-days, ſeveral people, who doubt whether hoſpitals are eſtabliſhments uſeful to ſociety; and the greateſt objection made to them is, that ſuch inſtitutions encourage ſloth, by diverting the poorer claſs from making a proviſion for old age and infirmities.

In fact, it may happen, that the hope of aſſiſtance in ſickneſs, or of an aſylum in an advanced age, ſometimes renders them leſs laborious, and leſs provident:

but the wages of thoſe men, who maintain themſelves by common labour are ſo circumſcribed, that they muſt maintain a continual ſtruggle with themſelves, in order to ſubmit to thoſe ſelf-denials which a daily laying by their ſavings to any value would require. The laws of ſociety, which ſubject that claſs of men to the imperious ſway of land owners, or monied men, cannot juſtify the want of compaſſion for them, in thoſe moments when old age, and diſeaſe, deprive them of the very neceſſaries of life; and I think it would be very unjuſt to require from them, a kind of ſelf-denial, when ſuch a ſcanty ſhare of common natural inheritance is allotted them, or to expect that they ſhould poſſeſs that ſpirit of reflection which knows at every inſtant, how to connect the future with the preſent. Nothing is therefore more conformable to the laws of equity, than theſe public eſtabliſhments, where the real poor find aſſiſtance in their infirmities, and diſeaſes, and if there are any moments in which their reliance on ſuch aſſiſtance renders them leſs frugal, there are alſo others, when the ſame reliance preſerves them

them from the moſt fatal deſpair. I am therefore of opinion, that it is beſt to adhere to thoſe ancient ideas of humanity, which are conſecrated by time, and the opinion of all nations, and we ought to miſtruſt that ſpirit of refined delicacy, which diſcovering ſome hitherto unnoticed connections in the direction of public affairs, induces men to pre-determine, that if all they now ſee, had been perceived before, nothing would remain upon its preſent footing: but they would be much more ſtruck with the motives that eſtabliſhed common opinions, if it was poſſible for them now to diſcover them for the firſt time.

THERE are other queſtions upon this ſubject; not ſo general, but more ſuſceptible of doubt. Would it not, for example, be better to aſſiſt the ſick in their own houſes, than to have them under cure in a public hoſpital? That method is perfectly applicable to all places of ſmall extent, but in great cities, the duties of charity could not be fulfilled in that man-

ner, without incurring a much larger expence.

We ſee that in a well regulated houſe, ſuch as the charitable hoſpital of the pariſh of St. Sulpice at Paris, the diligent care of one hundred and twenty-eight ſick demands only a phyſician, a ſurgeon, and ſurgeon's mate who does not reſide there, fourteen women of the ſiſterhood of charity, including thoſe who have the care of the diſpenſary, two men, and three women keepers of the infirmary; this number, as may be eaſily perceived, bears no kind of proportion with that which would be required, if the ſame number of ſick were to be attended in their lodgings, and at a great diſtance from each other. We may alſo obſerve, that for want of a ſufficient number of nurſes of the ſiſterhood of charity, or other perſons equally impreſſed with the ſpirit of religion, it would be neceſſary to employ mercenary nurſes, without any inſpection over them, without any internal motives to attach them continually to their duty: in ſhort, in a public eſtabliſhment, the phyſician and ſur-

ſurgeon are encouraged in their labours by the deſire of fame, and that ſtimulus would not exiſt, if they were to beſtow their ſkill on obſcure objects, the effects of which would conſequently be unknown.

I MUST own, nevertheleſs, that a charitable eſtabliſhment for the poor may be rendered through extreme negligence, ſo very fatal, that the moſt defective and careleſs aſſiſtance would deſerve the preference, but no eſtabliſhment whatever will bear any degree of compariſon, if we once conſider it as in an actual ſtate of diſorder.

THE intentions of hoſpitals that ſerve as an aſylum to the needy, when they become incapable of labour through old age, might be much eaſier anſwered by an annual ſum diſtributed among them; that claſs of the unfortunate has not the ſame wants as thoſe that are ſick, and a much greater number of abuſes are to be found in the hoſpitals deſtined for the retreat of the healthy poor. Age and exhauſted ſtrength

not bearing the ſame external ſigns as ſickneſs, the directors may be more eaſily influenced by recommendations, and practices of that kind have been diſcovered in the general hoſpital at Paris; but though it is the duty of the King's miniſters conſtantly to keep a ſtrict watch over the obſervance of the rules eſtabliſhed in the hoſpitals, they are not juſtifiable in rendering them more ſevere: theſe arrangements appear cruel when they are made without any reaſon; and government is only forgiven for the aboliſhment of an ill calculated charitable eſtabliſhment, when it is obſerved to extend its beneficence to more meritorious objects.

Of all the eſtabliſhments due to the ſpirit of humanity, thoſe whoſe utility appears to me to be attended with the greateſt inconveniences, are the houſes deſtined for the reception of foundlings: thoſe laudable inſtitutions undoubtedly prevent beings, worthy of compaſſion, from being ſacrificed to the unnatural ſentiments of their parents: but we have inſenſibly accuſtomed ourſelves to look on foundling hoſ-

hoſpitals as public depoſitories, where the ſovereign thinks it right to maintain the children of the pooreſt of his ſubjects; and this idea, by gaining ground, has looſened the ties of paternal love and duty. This abuſive practice increaſes daily, and its progreſs will ſome time or other embarraſs government: for the remedy is difficult, if pallitatives only are employed, and extreme meaſures would be approved of, only at the moment when the exceſs of the diſorder ſhall ſtrike every one with aſtoniſhment.

However, we cannot avoid a painful ſenſation, when we obſerve, that the redoubled cares of government to ſave and ſupport this generation of deſerted children, leſſens the remorſe of parents, and augments their number daily. Two thouſand of them were yearly tranſported to Paris, being ſent as a merchandize from the different places where there was no eſtabliſhment authorized to receive them: nine out of ten died on the road, or a few days after their arrival: it was not poſſible to become acquainted with ſuch a fla-

a flagrant violation of the rights of humanity, without endeavouring to apply a remedy: on the repreſentation I made of it, the King by an edict of his council, prohibited ſuch cruel tranſportations; and at the ſame time, his Majeſty adopted proper meaſures, to cauſe theſe children to be received in the charitable houſes neareſt to the ſpot where they ſhould be found in the hands of the carriers. It is impoſſible not to be ſtruck with the juſtice of theſe arrangements; and yet it is already experienced, that the neceſſity government was under to open new aſylums for foundlings, increaſed their number: I foreſaw it; but of theſe two evils, that which was principally to be avoided was, the annual ſacrifice of ſo many innocent victims.

I CANNOT too earneſtly recommend the purſuit of a practice now generally acknowledged to be the beſt; it is to cauſe theſe children to be put out to nurſe in the country: for the places where they are commonly collected together become real charnel houſes, both from the inſufficiency of

of a too general attention, and the dangerous effects of a corrupted air.

In reflecting upon all that I have advanced on the ſucceſſive increaſe of the number of deſerted children, I am induced to ſolicit pariſh miniſters, and the clergy of all orders, to be more zealous than ever in their inſtructions, to divert the people from thoſe ſecret crimes, over which the laws have ſo little power; it is on ſuch occaſions among many other, that we feel how neceſſary the aſſiſtance of religion is, to the maintenance of public order: and thoſe who are indifferent to that powerful ſpring, ſhew their ignorance of the imperfection of the reſources of government. An enlightened man may love virtue for its own ſake: but by far the greateſt part of mankind, deprived of the aſſiſtance of education, and always put out of countenance by the wretchedneſs of their ſtation, muſt be ſupported by an active idea of good and evil, and by ſentiments of hope and fear, that may curb them in the midſt of the ignorance that ſurrounds them. Philoſophers of this age! be ſatisfied with having

having helped to liberate religion from the principles of a cruel ſpirit of intolerance; you would be in the wrong to deſire more: leave to mankind, the moſt ſalutary reſtraint upon their paſſions, and the moſt conſoling of all ideas.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERNAL REGULATION OF PRISONS.

THE principal priſons of Paris have undergone entirely new alterations; and their internal regulations have been ſenſibly improved: this is undoubtedly a great object towards the relief of the unfortunate who are ſhut up in them: but, in order to render the benefit permanent, and whilſt we wiſh that it may be imitated every where, it is neceſſary to explain the motives of the alterations ordered by the King, and to point out the principles of order, juſtice, and humanity, that are applicable to eſtabliſhments of a ſimilar nature. This will even be fulfilling one of the principal views that were propoſed, in

in the conſtruction of a new priſon that might ſerve as a model, and a continual exitement to improve all the other priſons in the kingdom upon the ſame plan. This extenſive and affecting conſideration, will perhaps inſpire ſome degree of intereſt and indulgence for the details this ſubject requires: I ſhall, however, endeavour to reduce them within a narrow compaſs; but on ſo important a matter, and when more eſpecially, the queſtion is on a branch of management that would not perhaps have been ſo long neglected, if it had not been ſo remote from the public view, ſhould I be juſtifiable to give only general ideas, and to ſet aſide uſeful explanations, which ceaſe to be unintereſting when they are calculated to anſwer the great objects in view?

It did not appear to me, that it was ſufficient to propoſe to the King to deſtroy thoſe dreadful receptacles known under the name of *Fort l'Evêque* and *Petit Chatelet*, where improvident debtors, and priſoners confined for trifling offences, being confounded in a very narrow ſpace with criminals, had

had equally to protect themſelves againſt the fatal effects of a contagious exhalation, and the corrupting ſpectacle of an obſcene collection of all manner of vices.

I DID not think it ſufficient to ſubſtitute to theſe places, infectious under theſe two points of view, a large priſon where there is a free circulation of air, and where ſeparate wards and areas do not permit either, or various kinds of priſoners to be confounded together.

I CONSIDERED that it was likewiſe important, not only to put a ſtop to the various abuſive practices that were multiplied to exceſs in the interior of theſe houſes, but alſo to prevent their return, the too common effect of time, and of the relaxation that accompanies it.

THE irregularities that were remarked, owed their origin to diverſe cauſes; and here I am obliged to enter into ſome details: the goal-keeper, and the regiſter, having no ſettled ſalaries, their emoluments were compoſed of certain fees, whereof ſome

ſome were tolerated, and ſome were abuſes: they were required of the priſoners, on their entering, or being diſcharged out of priſon, for the hire of the rooms, and for diverſe furniture; and moreover, the captivity of theſe priſoners laſted until they had diſcharged thoſe dues. At the ſame time, another kind of irregularity was connived at, and a tap-room for tobacco, ſnuff, wine and brandy, was eſtabliſhed in the middle of the priſons; this toleration which was favourable to libertiniſm, excited the priſoners to unneceſſary expences and tempted them to make uſe of the credit they were able to obtain.

THE rate at which the boarding of the priſoners was fixed, required alſo to be ſpeedily altered; thoſe among theſe unfortunate men, who had no private reſource of their own, received daily, twenty ounces of bread, for all their food; and that allowance was only bettered by uncertain alms, unequally diſtributed. There exiſted another hardſhip: the priſoners ſlept upon ſtraw, and ragged blankets; and as the furniſhing of them was contracted for

for by the goal-keeper, a frequent change ſo eſſentially requiſite for cleanlineſs and ſalubrity, was repugnant to his private intereſt.

NEITHER muſt I omit, that the turnkeys being paid by the goal-keeper, the ſavings that he ſought to make on that expence, often hindered him from making choice of proper perſons; and the priſoners were expoſed to be ill-treated, impoſed upon, and defrauded by little pecuniary exactions.

LASTLY, and this evil was a local conſequence; the priſoners were forced to eat either in a little area without ſhelter, or in the peſtilential dungeon where they ſpent the night.

IT was theſe great inconveniencies, and ſeveral others leſs ſtriking, that I endeavoured to remedy, by a very extenſive regulation: and though it had not received the King's approbation at the time of my retreat from the miniſtry, yet as all the principal arrangements have been ſince

executed, and as thoſe that have been neglected, may perhaps ſome day appear important, I think it will not be uſeleſs to give the ſubſtance of them.

My aim was to eſtabliſh in the interior of the priſons, a permanent order, independent of the effects of time, of the removal of perſons, and of that indifference which never fails to be felt, in proportion as the public attention decreaſes, and the co-operators are no longer animated by a lively ſentiment of the abuſive practices that were deſtroyed, or by the agitation that is inſpired by every novelty.

It appeared to me, after ſeveral inquiries, that this aim would nearly be attained, by ordering,

That, to avoid, both on the part of the goal-keeper, and of the regiſter and turnkeys, all manner of intereſted views contrary to order, and to the care of the priſoners, the oeconomical management ſhould be entirely unconnected with the ad-

adminiſtration of the police, and of the public ſafety.

THAT, for this purpoſe, there ſhould be a director, or goal-keeper, ſolely charged with the maintenance of good order, and with the reception, or diſcharge of the priſoners, in conſequence of orders that he ſhould be obliged to obey.

THAT this director ſhould not have any caſual emoluments, but that his ſalary ſhould be fixed, and paid by the King.

THAT, to prevent the nomination of this director from being ever made through improper influence, and to be aſſured that his rank would command reſpect, he ſhould always be choſen from among the ſergeants of the French guards; that corps having been long diſtinguiſhed for its honeſty and prudent firmneſs, and having a real intereſt to be thought worthy of the reputation it has acquired.

THAT to render this choice ſo much the more honourable, and more independant of

any kind of favour, the ſergeants of the regiment being aſſembled, ſhould point out by a plurality of votes, any three, they ſhould deem propereſt to fill the place, and the firſt preſident of the parliament of Paris, ſhould make his choice of one of the three.

THAT the regiſter ſhould likewiſe be paid by the King; and ſhould find ſecurity for his pecuniary truſt, or depoſit a certain ſum of money.

THAT the rooms in the priſon ſhould not be hired for the profit of the director, nor of the regiſter.

THAT there ſhould be no other levy of money in the priſon, but that which ſhould proceed from the rent of the private rooms; and the produce of that rent fixed at a moderate rate, ſhould be entirely appropriated to the expences of the priſon.

THAT this receipt of money, and the oeconomical management, that is to ſay, the food of the priſoners, and of the ſervants of the priſon, the diſtribution and the

the reception of the bread, the furniſhing and care of the linen, furniture and blankets, the direction of the diſpenſary, and the care of the ſick ſhould be entirely intruſted to women of the ſiſterhood of charity, under the direction of one of the ſuperiors of that order, who ſhould keep an exact account both of the receipts, and the expences.

THAT for the future, the priſoners ſhould receive twenty-four ounces of bread, inſtead of twenty-two; ſoup both morning and night, and a quarter of a pound of meat twice a week.

THAT there ſhould be a determined hour for their meals, in a common hall.

THAT in another hall well aired, there ſhould be a mattreſs, and a good blanket for each priſoner.

THAT thoſe alſo who ſhould have private rooms, and who ſhould deſire to find themſelves in food at their own expence, ſhould be furniſhed with it, from without

the priſon, that no confuſion might take place between the expences borne by the King for the poor priſoners, and that of others, and alſo, that the nurſes of the ſiſterhood of charity, might devote their time only to the ſervice of the poor and unfortunate, conformable to the reſpectable ſpirit of their inſtitution.

THAT all cooks, or ſhop-keepers ſhould be prohibited from ſelling any thing on credit to any claſs of priſoners, that their captivity might never be lengthened by the debts they might otherwiſe contract during their impriſonment.

THAT no tap-room ſhould be eſtabliſhed in the priſon, but a ſingle one only, ſhould be authoriſed in the neighbourhood, under the reſtrictions, however, of ſelling only twice a day to the priſoners, at a fixed hour, and within a limited quantity.

THAT the turnkeys ſhould be paid by the King, and their ſalaries ſhould be ſufficiently profitable to incite proper perſons to ſolicit theſe places; and that as they would

would thereby no longer ſtand in need of any other emoluments, they ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed, if they endeavoured to procure any from the priſoners, by direct or indirect means. And that theſe turnkeys ſhould wear a livery, by which they would be known in the areas, and thereby command the reſpect of the priſoners.

THAT the priſon of the women ſhould have a woman turnkey.

THAT all neceſſary precautions for cleanlineſs and ſalubrity, ſhould be exactly obſerved.

THAT alms not being any longer neceſſary either to feed the priſoners, or to improve their condition, they ſhould henceforth be applied only to the delivery of thoſe women confined for debts owing for nurſing themſelves in the month, and their infants, and of other debtors moſt worthy of compaſſion.

THAT having thus aſſured to the priſoners, a certainty of enjoying all that

could concern their health and the ſalubrity of the air, every ſpecies of libertiniſm ſhould be the more ſeverely prohibited, that prohibition being not only neceſſary for the maintenance of order, but alſo that it might never be forgotten, that priſons are places of puniſhment, and of ſelf-denial. The duties of humanity ought then to be carefully attended to: but it is important that the imagination be ſtruck, and that tokens of controul and reſtraint ſhould be perceived every where. Thus, no kind of gaming was to be tolerated, and after a certain hour, all fires and lights were to be extinguiſhed, nor were the friends or relations to be allowed to viſit them after that hour.

Such were nearly the principal articles of the regulations that ſeemed to me proper to eſtabliſh permanent order, in the interior of a large priſon.

It is followed in ſeveral eſſential points: but I muſt regret that a very important arrangement was not adopted, namely, the intruſting the oeconomical management to the

the charitable ſiſterhood. It will perhaps, be ſaid, that it matters very little, becauſe all they were to do, is executed. The goal keeper's wife takes care of the linen, contractors out of doors, find the priſoners their ſtated food: there is an apothecary in the priſon, and a nurſe aſſiſted by ſome ſervants attends the ſick: the rent of the rooms is depoſited in the hands of the goal-keeper, who is intruſted with the receipt and the expence, but keeps an exact account, monthly inſpected by an overſeer, choſen from a diſtinguiſhed rank, and who alſo inſpects the whole interior management of the priſon.

No one relies more than I do, on that inſpection: but men are tranſitory, the firſt ardour is liable to be weakened, and the more unneceſſary a long ſeries of regularity has rendered the conſtant attention of ſuperiors, the greater progreſs is made in abuſive practices, when they begin to ſpring up again.

THUS, ſome day or other perhaps, a ſelfiſh goal-keeper may look for ſome emoluments from

from the truſt repoſed in him, in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed rules; from ſome motive or other, he may favour the contractor who furniſhes the proviſions, and the retailer of liquors, and conſequently tolerate a bad diſtribution: he may give them leave to ſell on credit: he may himſelf ſell ſome articles to the priſoners, which being the occaſion of their contracting freſh debts, their deliverance will be retarded.

In ſhort, the general expence will then increaſe, the managers of the finances of the priſon will complain, ſome ſort of contract will be propoſed; it will be accepted under a view of oeconomy; and it will be by means of ſavings, the hardſhip of which will bear on the priſoners, and by other modes of vexation, that the goal-keeper become the contractor, will aſſure his profits, and as it will be neceſſary for him to have the regiſter in his intereſts, that he may not be an importunate ſpy on his conduct; the latter will be a ſharer in theſe fraudulent profits.

An honeſt intelligent inſpector might undoubtedly prevent the introduction of ſuch diſorders; but that inſpector himſelf may one day or other perhaps be appointed ſolely through influence, and ſuch a one will take care to receive his ſalary punctually, and for the reſt, will content himſelf with now and then being ſeen in the priſon.

How many examples of a ſimilar relaxation do we not ſee in every branch of adminiſtration? The inſpectors, comptrollers, verificators, &c. ſink into the enjoyment of a vain title, when the general adminiſtration does not oblige them to be active, and it is always thoſe whoſe functions are active, neceſſary and every day repeated, who imperceptibly become abſolute maſters.

It was therefore, becauſe I principally extended my views to futurity that I reckoned it important to ſeparate the oeconomical branch from the governing and police adminiſtration, and I wiſhed to intruſt the firſt, with the ſiſters of charity, whoſe

whoſe ſpirit is always the ſame, becauſe their zeal is maintained and ſupported by a fixed ſentiment of religion: order and honeſty are permanent among them, from the ſame motives which determined their devoting themſelves entirely to the ſervice of the poor. Such inſtitutions, peculiar to the Roman Catholic religion, are truly reſpectable: and the aſſiſtance derived from them cannot be too much prized: for adminiſtration itſelf, even with the help of the moſt careful inſpection, could never acquire the active influence of that ſecret motive which excites them to an exact accompliſhment of the moſt difficult duties and obliges them to beſtow as much care and attention on minute and unknown particulars, as the vaineſt and moſt deſirous of praiſe could be capable of, in what they might do, or ſay to captivate the public favour.

But there is one ineſtimable advantage which cannot be again changed, that is, the ſpaciouſneſs of the priſon, and all the arrangements of order and convenience derived from that circumſtance. The interior diſtributions

of the priſon will leave nothing to wiſh for, as ſoon as the laſt new buildings ſhall be finiſhed, and during my miniſtry, the infirmary was already as well aired, and as commodious as it was poſſible to deſire. The eſtabliſhment of a new priſon at the *Hotêl de la Force*, has enabled government to leave in the priſons of the *Grand Chatélet*, only ſuch priſoners as are confined by order of the court of that name; thus, this laſt mentioned priſon is now ſufficiently roomy; and I believe, that all the interior arrangements required by humanity are at preſent accompliſhed, conformable to the King's intentions made known in his Letters Patent of the year 1780. The priſons at Paris then will ſoon approach every degree of perfection that may rationally be expected. The example has already been followed in ſome provinces: and if they continue to aſſiſt the towns that are in need of it, the old priſons that were become moſt horrible places, will ſucceſſively change, and the moſt unhappy and forgotten part of the King's ſubjects, will experience the effects of the royal beneficence, in their dark abodes.

THIS commiſeration of the ſovereign for men who are guilty of ill conduct, does not militate againſt his juſtice: he muſt undoubtedly inflict puniſhments; but as it is for the maintenance of order in ſociety, that ſo great a power is depoſited in his hands; if the puniſhments inflicted in his name were to be obſcure, unknown and uſeleſs for example, I will venture to ſay, that from that moment, he would exerciſe an authority that no mortal on earth has a right to exerciſe. It belongs only to that divine and all-powerful being, who ſcrutinizes the human heart, who is acquainted with our inmoſt thoughts, who unerringly diſcerns the effects of temper, and of education, who duly weighs the influence of preſent circumſtances, the greatneſs of temptations, the duration of our reſiſtance and the ſincerity of our remorſe; to inflict puniſhments unknown to any one, and to exerciſe his juſtice in ſecret. Who ought to feel more compaſſion for the faults, or errors of men, than the Sovereign of a great empire? For, if from the high degree of elevation where his right has placed him, he diſcerns the con-

connection between each claſs of ſociety; if he is ſenſible of the power the wealthy have over the poor; if he obſerves the habitual ſtate of want and anxiety to which the laws of ſociety reduce thoſe who have no property; if at the ſame time, he remarks that this numerous claſs of his ſubjects, is alſo deprived of the knowledge and inſtruction acquired by a good education: laſtly, if he conſiders, that the greateſt part of them reflect and are provident only by chance, and at certain intervals, theſe afflicting but juſt ideas will make him conſcious that puniſhments are neceſſary to keep within bounds, from fear and by public examples, thoſe who are continually tempted by their wretchedneſs and ignorance; but he will at the ſame time diſcover, that independent of this painful obligation, every circumſtance ſeems to invite a Sovereign to indulgence; and that even whilſt he is forced to exert his ſeverity, pity ought to be at the bottom of his heart.

If brutal men who never formed a reflection on theſe various conſiderations,

look on the guilty as foreign to the human race, and think they may torment them in ſecret, under pretence of juſtice, we ought to abhor both their ignorance and their cruelty. But when monarchs themſelves are hard-hearted and inſenſible, that is a real calamity: the earth then ſeems as it were ſtruck with ſterility; they neither can co-operate to the public welfare, nor ſecond it, becauſe it is wholly indifferent to them: neither can they concern themſelves for the unhappy, as their miſery does not move them; if any acts of public beneficence are done, they cannot be ſaid to ſhare in them; then, the nation alone, holds out encouragement, and public opinion, rewards; while the ſovereign who might almoſt be looked on as an object of compaſſion, is only acquainted with the terror inſpired by his power.

I LOVE to dwell on theſe reflections, not only becauſe they endear the King's perſonal qualities more than ever, but particularly, and principally, becauſe it is pleaſing to think, that in all times and places, goodneſs is the firſt of all virtues: it

it is goodneſs, and the ſenſibility it produces, that connects mankind together: it is goodneſs that opens a communication between the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the weak, and laſtly, between the Sovereign and all thoſe to whom he may be ſerviceable. It is through the medium of the infinite idea we form of beneficence, and of the adoration we pay to this perfection, that elevating our thoughts to the Almighty firſt mover of the univerſe, we believe that our happineſs is not indifferent to him: and this conſoling perſuaſion cheriſhes our hopes, and ſoftens the bitter moments of life.

It has been ſaid, "That juſtice is the "true beneficence of Sovereigns;" this maxim has met with applauſe, and I believe it is very juſt, but under a more extenſive point of view, for if we conſider the exigences of the vulgar, the narrow limits of its reſources, and the ſevere yoke impoſed by the laws of property, it may alſo be ſometimes ſaid, "that beneficence is the "juſtice of Kings." When a Sovereign diſtributes rewards, when he ſits as a judge

either in his council, or through the medium of his tribunals, then he is only a ſupreme arbiter, and it is ſufficient that he ſhould be juſt: but in the management of a great kingdom, the Sovereign appears to be an emanation from the beneficent and celeſtial ſpirit, who watches over mankind, produces the graſs in the fields, and brings to maturity the corn that ſerves for their food: he muſt through the whole extent of his power, imitate that benign influence of nature: exact juſtice will not aſſiſt thoſe who have nothing to defend, and who might ſtarve, under the ſway of ſocial laws, when they offer in vain, the uſe of their time, and their labour.

It is therefore the beneficence of the Sovereign, they more eſpecially require; that beneficence will be carefull to provide work for them, in thoſe moments when country labour is at a ſtand; it will procure them other kinds of aſſiſtance under unhappy accidents, and ſevere calamities: it is likewiſe the anxious concern of the Sovereign that keeps a ſtrict watch over the

the price and quantity of proviſions, and tempers with prudence the effect of thoſe laws, that inſure the produce of the earth to thoſe only, who are poſſeſſors of riches.

In ſhort, it is the ſame beneficence, which eſtabliſhes aſylums for forſaken old age, gives a certainty of aſſiſtance to the ſick who are deprived of reſources, and even takes pity on thoſe whom their errors have conducted to the dungeons of a priſon.

It is by juſtice that every man enjoys his rights unmoleſted: it is by beneficence that the poor acquire any rights at all: it is for juſtice that Sovereigns are reſpected: it is for beneficence they are bleſſed. Alas! theſe two virtues, juſtice and beneficence are not too arduous a taſk: let us not confound together, thoſe diſtinct duties: the wide field of human misfortunes affords ample ſcope for the diſplay of both. Let us then wiſh for juſtice in Sovereigns, in order to aſſure rewards to merit, and to ſecure to every one his property; but let us alſo cheriſh

in them, that beneficence which neceſſarily renders them attentive to public misfortune, and engages them to prevent, or alleviate it. In ſhort, if we have any affection for them, let us alſo wiſh they may poſſeſs this amiable virtue, that they may completely enjoy all the charms of power.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

A PARTICULAR ARRANGEMENT RELATIVE TO ONE CLASS OF PRISONERS.

AMONG the unfortunate who are ſhut up in the priſons, there are ſome particularly worthy of the Sovereign's attention; namely, thoſe who being confined by order of his tribunals, whether on ſuſpicion, or on circumſtantial evidence, are afterwards ſet free, and declared innocent of the crimes they were charged with.

THESE unfortunate people have nevertheleſs experienced all the evils of a long confinement; they have been injured in their reputations; they have been divert-

ed from their labours, or from their buſineſs. Such errors and miſtakes are perhaps unavoidable in all great ſocieties, but as it is in the name of the Sovereign that the tribunals act, it would be, methinks, perfectly juſt to grant an indemnification to thoſe, who have been victims to an ill grounded firſt opinion.

THE expence, as nearly as I have been able to eſtimate it, would be very trifling: I ſhould have had ſufficient time to collect preciſe informations on this ſubject, and to have propoſed to the King an arrangement ſo conformable to his virtues, had not the idea occurred to me too late. The recollection of this inattention gives me pain: but there is in the courſe of our ideas, an unknown fantaſtical fluctuation, that very often chaſes away from our mind thoſe thoughts which for numberleſs reaſons, ought to be moſt preſent to it: my regrets are leſſened by this confeſſion of my heedleſſneſs, and by inviting thoſe who ſhall have it in their power, to remedy the neglect.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMERCE OF CORN.

A PRUDENT legiſlation with reſpect to the commerce of corn, muſt always have an intimate connection with the happineſs of the people: I endeavoured to render this truth evident, in the chapters in which I diſcuſſed the principal queſtions relative to ſo important an article: of courſe there can be no neceſſity for my entering deeply into it again. I ſhall therefore obſerve, that I now look on that part of the work as weak, and very imperfect, in which I pointed out with too much preciſion, the minute precautions that were to be taken to prevent the price of corn being too dear. Experience has taught me, that we muſt rely in

a great meaſure on the prudence of adminiſtration, and that it is impoſſible to avoid conſigning that care to government. Undoubtedly, the price ought to ſerve to diſtinguiſh the moment when it is proper to forbid the exportation of corn; but in a kingdom ſo extenſive as France, that price cannot be determined by a general law applicable to all times and all places: for the word dearneſs may have a different meaning, according to the poſition of the provinces, their more or leſs numerous manufactories, and even according to the cuſtomary price: and an increaſe that would not frighten Languedoc, nor Provence, might give the alarm in Flanders, Picardy, and other places adjacent to the capital. I am ſtill of the ſame opinion, that the liberty of a free exportation of corn ought to be looked upon in France, as a conſtitutional right: but adminiſtration muſt reſtrain that liberty in certain places, and under certain circumſtances; and even extend the reſtriction to a general prohibition, when the informations which it alone is capable of receiving, call for that act of prudence: in fact, government alone

alone poſſeſſes the means of diſcerning and of aſcertaining with certainty the general exigencies of the kingdom, the appearance of the crops, the prohibitions of other nations, the rumours of war, and all political motions.

GOVERNMENT ought to be very attentive to theſe various circumſtances. Its negligence, or its ignorance may ſometimes be feared: but there are no juſt motives to ſuſpect it of partiality: for, if on the one hand, it wiſhes that an abundance of corn and its moderate price may prevent diſorder and public clamour; it is, on the other, conſonant to its policy, that the permanent and reaſonable price of that commodity may render the payment of the taxes eaſier. Exaggerated ſyſtems, for or againſt the liberty of exportation are what have excited dangerous revolutions: but as it was perceived that the inſtructions of certain pedantic ſpeculators were not founded in truth, they were no longer followed, and thoſe extreme ideas which can ſcarcely ever be properly connected with the deliberation and ſlowneſs of proceedings

required by ſo very delicate a branch of adminiſtration were given up. This great object of diſcuſſion had almoſt been forgotten during my miniſtry: and yet there were ſeveral inſtances that required attention, and obliged me to demand the King's orders, not only for a momentary prohibition of the exportation of corn from ſome provinces, but alſo for an importation, which alone could prevent the greateſt calamities.

I DO not dwell on the abſolute neceſſity of maintaining a free circulation of corn throughout the interior parts of the kingdom: methinks, there are not two opinions on that ſubject. Government muſt obſerve with pleaſure, both the amaſſing of grain, and the ſpeculations of commerce which occaſion them; becauſe they are an aſſiſtance given to the farmers and land-proprietors: but when theſe ſpeculations made in times of ſcarcity, degenerate to what is commonly called monoploy; that is to ſay, to a traffick, the ſole end of which is momentaneouſly to engroſs all the corn, in order afterwards

to

to impoſe rigorous conditions on the conſumers; then adminiſtration ought to ſet bounds to the effects of that cupidity, and a ſingle warning on its part will ſometimes ſuffice: but if that branch of the police was neglected, it would then be left in ſome meaſure to the inconſiderate impulſe of popular commotions: and that which a prudent adminiſtration muſt carefully avoid, is, ever being expoſed to be borne away, or led, or even ſimply forewarned by ſteps taken contrary to good order, and the reſpect due to authority.

A POSITIVE law on this ſubject would neceſſarily be inefficacious; for the difference between an uſeful ſpeculation, and an obnoxious engroſſing can never be poſitively aſcertained: and we ſhould go too far, if we pretended to apply permanent rules to inconſtant objects, and affectedly renounce the aſſiſtance of intelligent men.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

INQUIRIES ON THE CLEARING OF WASTE LANDS.

THE quantity of lands cultivated throughout the kingdom is unknown; and the conjectural eſtimates I was able to make on that ſubject are ſo indefinite that I cannot reſolve on inſerting them in a work, where I have endeavoured to be exact in all eſſential informations.

It ſhould ſeem that we ought at leaſt to know exactly, the extent of the lands that have been cleared ſince 1776, at which time the ſovereign aſſured them an exemption from the land-tax, and the twentieths, during twenty years. To enjoy that ex-

exemption, it is requiſite to declare the reſolution taken to clear ſuch and ſuch parts: but as that declaration muſt neceſſarily be anterior to the undertaking, that the ſtate of the ſoil may be known, it is eaſy to conceive that a change of reſolution, or diſcouragement in the execution of it muſt introduce a great difference in the quantity of acres that were declared as going to be cleared, and of thoſe that are really ſo.

It was my wiſh to aſcertain theſe differences with exactneſs, but I was apprehenſive that theſe informations might alarm the cultivators of theſe lands, and give them an idea that they were an examination preparatory to ſome tax, or a reſtraint in their exemption, ſuch ſuſpicions are ſo eaſily raiſed, and their conſequences are generally ſo contrary to the exertions of induſtry, that government is forced to make a ſacrifice of ſundry important informations, to theſe conſiderations. A ſingular trait on that ſubject occurs to my mind. Twenty years ago, the Intendant of a province actuated by the laudable deſign of encouraging the making of honey and

and of increaſing the number of hives, began his operations by demanding a declaration of the quantity of hives then in being, in the province: his intention was not underſtood; it perhaps gave riſe to a certain diſtruſt: and in a few days all the hives were deſtroyed.

THIS ſhort anecdote may be looked upon as a leſſon of inſtruction for a monarchical adminiſtration: ſuſpicions ariſe the very inſtant there is an exertion of authority: confidence ſlowly, and difficultly ſucceeds that firſt ſentiment.

AFTER theſe obſervations on the inſufficiency of the informations that can be had from the declarations above mentioned, I ſhall nevertheleſs ſay, that thoſe made from 1766 to the end of 1780, indicate the deſign of clearing about nine hundred and fifty thouſand acres: but I cannot point out how far thoſe intentions were executed.

IN Provence, theſe declarations have been more extenſive than in any other part of

the kingdom, and Lorrain and Alſace are the generalities, where feweſt have been made.

An exemption from the taxes, during a certain number of years, is not in general a ſufficient encouragement to undertake the clearing of waſte lands: the want of a capital ſtops a great number of proprietors: ſometimes the difficulty of borrowing money: and ſometimes the high rate of intereſt are obſtacles to the progreſs of cultivation: I ſhall therefore, when I am upon thoſe ſubjects, in the next chapter, point out the propereſt methods of encouraging the clearing of waſte lands.

The diviſion of commons is an arrangement that ſhould tend to the ſame end; but that diviſion cannot take place in an uniform manner: its legiſlation muſt neceſſarily be different according to the nature of the property, and the ſpecies of reſources in each province; but as ſome reſpect muſt alſo be had to old eſtabliſhed cuſtoms, it is more eſpecially for ſuch arrangements that the mediation of the provincial ad-

adminiſtrations would be found uſeful: ſeveral of the provinces where the ſtates are held, have very good principles on that ſubject, and they are followed without any complaint.

THERE are alſo ſome undertakings for the clearing of waſte lands, that muſt neceſſarily be aſſiſted with ready money by government: this branch of expence is very rational: the money does not go out of the kingdom; and the earth generates more numerous inhabitants in proportion to its new produce. No kind of wealth can be more aſſured, nor more precious: the fertile plough-ſhare, and not the ſword procures it; and it is watered with the dew of heaven, and not with the blood of men. Alas! ye politicians and warriours who ſurround the throne, leave to the monarch's beneficence, the means of exertion: leave him ſufficient time to examine into the interior of his kingdom, and to know that it is in his power to ſow in it, new ſeeds of life and happineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

REFLECTIONS ON THE INTEREST OF MONEY, THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC CREDIT, AND THE CIRCULATION OF SPECIE.

THE firſt man, who, from motives of prudence, or avarice, wiſhed to barter a part of the produce of his lands, or of his labour, againſt a ſmall future increaſe of his income, furniſhed the idea of what is now called, intereſt of money.

Such tranſactions muſt have preceded the introduction of ſpecie, for the cultivator who ſtood in need of an hundred meaſures of corn to ſow in his fields, muſt have aſked them from him who had an overplus; and in the number of agreements

that muſt have originated from ſuch mutual aſſiſtance, the idea of giving a yearly rent for theſe advances muſt have naturally occurred. That ſimple method of connecting the conveniency of the lender with that of the borrower, has multiplied the means of labour, and has undoubtedly been one of the cauſes of that general activity which is now ſeen in all ſocieties.

The rate of intereſt is founded on the relation that exiſts between the quantity of money to be diſpoſed of, and the number of or the profit reſulting from them; uſes it is to be put to, but there is alſo a cuſtom that gives permanency to the rate generally adopted. The quantity of money borrowed and lent depends on the quantity of ſpecie, and the rapidity of its circulation. The number of uſes it is put to, and the advantages accruing from them, depend on the extent and fecundity of the ſoil, the multiplicity of eſtabliſhments for induſtry, the diverſity of commerce, and the magnitude of the national debt.

THE rate of intereſt in trade, and that which reſults from the current price of the funds, are the moſt ſuſceptible of variation.

THE engagments contracted by merchants are ſo preſſing and rigourous, that monied people may take advantage of moments of ſcarcity, or of poverty to raiſe a little, the common rate of intereſt; and as the price of the public funds depends on public credit, the different variations in the confidence of the people muſt neceſſarily occaſion the ſame in the rate of intereſt on the money laid out in that manner. Lands in France, commonly yield only two and a half *per cent.* after deducting the expences and taxes, when the proprietors do not keep them in their own hands: mortgage loans between individuals are ſtipulated at five per cent intereſt; but the borrowers being authoriſed to deduct from that intereſt, the twentieths levied on the real eſtate, that intereſt is reduced to leſs than four and a half per cent.

A LOW rate of intereſt is among the beſt promoters of all uſeful undertakings; it is by virtue of this advantage, that land owners find aſſiſtance on reaſonable terms, and may engage in new cultivations; both merchants and manufacturers are likewiſe ſatisfied with a leſs profit, and are more ſucceſsful in their competition with foreign induſtry.

A LENDER, generally conſidered, is only an inactive proprietor; the borrower on the contrary, has ſomething in view, which ſociety ſome way or other profits by; government therefore ought to wiſh, that in debates about the rate of intereſt, they may get the advantage, but as the circumſtances that determine that rate are more powerful then authority itſelf, a ſovereign can never expect to fix it according to his will. And yet the political object of government ought not to be forgotten, by running into the other exreme, and ſuffering the rate of intereſt to be entirely abandoned to the fluctuating reſult of private combinations.

It is therefore a very prudent precaution to adopt a legal rate of intereſt for all mortgaged bonds, and all public tranſactions: that rule keeps cupidity within bounds, and does not at all prejudice the circulation of the ſpecie: for neither the profits of cultivation, nor thoſe undertakings which are not either excluſive by privileges, or ſingle in their kind, could bear the expence of an intereſt at a higher rate than common; and it is not encouraging induſtry, to favour extraordinary demands on the part of the lenders.

It is nevertheleſs by general arrangements that the ſovereign may more eſpecially attain the end, that he ought to propoſe to himſelf. And as the important advantages of adminiſtration are ſenſibly connected together, and it is impoſſible to attend to the public good in one branch without indirectly benefiting the others, government efficaciouſly contributes to lower the rate of intereſt, by the ſame cares and attentions, that increaſe the proſperity of the kingdom: thus the protecting of commerce; thoſe political treaties by which

it is favoured, the encouragements dealt out to induſtry, and in general all arrangements, which, whilſt they augment the profits made by the nation in its commercial intercourſes, and introduce into France, a greater quantity of gold and ſilver, have a favourable influence on the rate of intereſt.

PRINCIPLES of juſtice tend alſo to the ſame end, becauſe, by ſecuring the lenders they are thereby engaged to be contented with a more moderate retribution: thus, laws that inſure the ſtability of mortgages, and thoſe that prevent chicane and ſubterfuges on the part of debtors, are of infinite importance. The ſpirit of the courts of juſtice is very often in oppoſition on this ſubject, to that of adminiſtration. The firſt, conſiders the cauſe between the lender and borrower only in a detached view, and ſimilar to all other actions brought before the tribunals for deciſion: on the contrary, the ſpirit of adminiſtration ought to be conſcious of the political connection between that action, and the activity of the circulation of the ſpecie,

cie, whoſe influence is ſo powerful over the rate of intereſt and the proſperity of the kingdom. Government therefore ought to do its duty, and diſcharge the functions that belong to it, by attending to the formation of laws that may ſimplify the actions brought by creditors on mortgage, againſt unpunctual debtors, and render them more ſpeedy, and leſs expenſive.

A FEW borrowers would ſuffer; but the ſtate would find its advantage in that arrangement, and its welfare being ſtrictly connected with the free communication ofaſſiſtance which depends on confidence, would be increaſed in a proportion, whoſe progreſs it is impoſſible to determine.

IT has often been ſaid, that the adminiſtration of the finances muſt ſee with pleaſure, the difficulties that occur in pecuniary tranſactions between individuals, becauſe it engages them the more readily to lay out their money in the loans made by government. This is aſſuredly, a narrow calculation: the ſpecie that is not exported out of the kingdom is always

brought back by continual circulation, to be employed by monied men, in the moſt uſeful manner to themſelves; and if the variety of the different uſes it is put to, cauſes it to be leſs rapidly converted into government ſecurities, it promotes during its courſe, all the undertakings that are the primary ſources of wealth.

It is therefore only at peculiar moments that private loans are in oppoſition to thoſe made by government; but in the courſe of time, the reſources of finance increaſe with the public proſperity; thus a government that ſhould be diſpleaſed at the loans made on lands by way of mortgage, and that ſhould, from principle, let thoſe ſhackles exiſt that may diſcourage ſuch tranſactions; would be as politically wrong, as if it had clogged uſeful labours, in order to facilitate the levy of ſoldiers, or to force them to be contented with a ſmaller pay.

Lastly, there exiſts another conſideration obvious to every capacity: the public debt is now ſo immenſe, that the conditions

ditions of the loans made to government, have a more or leſs direct influence on the common rate of intereſt: and as the extenſion of public credit partly determines the price of the public funds, it naturally leads me to make a few obſervations on ſo important a ſubject; but as I have already conſidered this queſtion under a general point of view, in the introduction of this work, I have only to point out the cares and precautions requiſite to maintain public credit.

These reflections will perhaps be leſs attended to at preſent by the nation, than in any other moment, ſo much is it favoured by the preſent circumſtances; the war has been got over without any interruption in the payments; the reimburſements, which, even in conformity to the laws, might have been ſuſpended during that time, were continued to be made with exactneſs: the public account given in during my miniſtry, put an end to the obſcurity that had ſurrounded financial tranſactions during ſeveral ages; the preſent ſtate of our finances is ſuch, that after

after the payment of a few arrears, no conſiderable loan will be neceſſary; the natural increaſe of the King's revenue, and the immenſe and remarkable quantity of gold and ſilver that peace will introduce into the kingdom, are ſo many means that without any effort, will ſmooth the paths of adminiſtration.

ENGLAND is at the ſame time, burdened with a debt, which compared with its reſources, alarms the ſtockholders: Holland, accuſtomed to place a great part of its ſavings, in the funds of that nation, is now become indifferent about it, owing to ſeveral private conſiderations. Every circumſtance appears then to co-operate to the ſtrengthening of the public credit of France; and I am of opinion that that credit ſupported even by the very nature of things, may reſiſt many errors of government: but when we write, it ſhould be with a view to all kinds of poſſible occurences: thoſe critical moments I have ſeen may return; the difficulties I experienced may be reproduced: in ſhort it is eſſential to extend beneficial arrangements

to the utmoſt, even in the midſt of the moſt fortunate circumſtances; it is important to increaſe their influence, and to ſecond the career of proſperity. I am therefore very far from looking on the general reflections I am going to make, as indifferent to the preſent ſubject.

It ſhould ſeem at firſt ſight, that the maintaining of public credit requires a very ſimple kind of adminiſtration, becauſe the different methods whereby the public confidence is ſupported, are neither obſcure nor difficult to conceive, when ſeparately examined; but what is eaſily comprehended, may not ſo eaſily occur to the mind; and it very often happens, that two different ideas have never been compared together, by the very man who ſhould be moſt qualified to diſcover their analogy.

Wherefore then does the miniſter of the finances who is conſcious of the neceſſity of public credit, and who deſires to inſpire the nation with confidence, abandon ſo often the path that ſhould conduct him to that end? it is becauſe, in all

all affairs whatever, it is neceſſary in order to make the means continually anſwer to the plan, that a certain degree of reflection ſhould be joined with activity and vigilance.

Resources will be abundantly numerous, whenever a miniſter will chuſe to attend to the modification of the taxes, to the diſtributions of the encouragements, neceſſary to commerce and manufactures, and to every other general arrangement of adminiſtration. There is a kind of tradition of informations on that ſubject, which it is eaſy to profit by: beſides theſe great branches are not ſo intimately connected together, but that they may be ſeparately diſcuſſed, and executed at different times: but public credit and the method of giving birth to, of maintaining, and extending it, fall under a quite different deſcription: confidence is an impreſſion that originates in the ſame manner as eſteem, from a ſeries of proper actions; but with this difference, that errors of the mind are as prejudicial to it, as the failings of the heart.

It is then neceſſary, in order to inſpire that ſentiment, to unite permanently honeſt principles, to a multiplicity of cares and attentions, that ought to vary according to circumſtances, and which a a miniſter muſt find out and diſtinguiſh himſelf; for in that reſearch, it would be in vain to ſeek for principles in books, or for inſtructions in any writings.

But theſe reflections are not indiſtinctly applicable to all countries; the credit of England, more eſpecially, is founded on a baſis, ſo ſimple, ſo clear, ſo ſtrengthened by long habits, and above all ſo independent of authority, that the ſupporting of ſuch a credit ought rather to be attributed to the political conſtitution of that country, than to the abilities of the miniſter.

It is therefore from a re-union of circumſtances which proceed from the nature of its goverment, that public credit in France requires ſo much care and attention.

THE abſolute authority of a ſovereign, and an unbounded public confidence, are two diſtinct ideas that require the help of intermediary ones, to be perfectly conciliated together: that authority in France, is ſubject to ſome modifications, when it is to be exerciſed to increaſe the ſovereign's revenue, becauſe the laws that eſtabliſh new taxes muſt be regiſtered in the parliaments, and theſe courts have the right of guiding the Monarch's juſtice by their repreſentations; but a ſimple edict of the council, or a miniſterial order authoriſed by the ſovereign are ſufficient to ſuſpend public payments, or to reduce intereſts; inſomuch, that the ſupreme courts cannot legally take cognizance of theſe arrangements: and they have often been obſerved to be ſilent in the midſt of operations the moſt prejudicial to the fortunes of a conſiderable part of the nation. The only method, therefore, of maintaining or reſtoring public credit in France, is to make the nation eaſy as to the ſovereign's intentions, and to convince the people that no reaſons whatever will induce him to break his engagements; and as the import-

portance of public credit is now univerſally acknowledged; as voluntary injuſtices are no longer dreaded, but rather the conſequences of diſorder and neceſſity, it will eaſily be conceived that a prudent and economical conduct on the part of the adminiſtration of the finances, is one of the ſtrongeſt pillars of public credit. That adminiſtration muſt be ſeen in the continual act of reforming abuſive practices and uſeleſs profits; it muſt be obſerved to reſiſt all pretenſions of private intereſt; it muſt alſo be found taken up with arrangements that may prevent the diminution of the King's revenue, and with ſuch as may leſſen the public expences. The nation muſt be convinced that ſuch an adminiſtration is always perfectly acquainted with the ſtate of the finances, and it muſt alſo perceive the regularity eſtabliſhed to arrive at that knowledge. It is likewiſe neceſſary, in order to ſtrengthen the public confidence that it ſhould be known that the miniſter of the finances has a certain degree of credit with the ſovereign: ſuch an opinion will give an idea that it will be in his power to controul the public

expences foreign to his department; and that he will not only be intruſted with the care of increaſing the revenue in proportion to the expences of the ſtate, but that he will alſo be hearkened to, when he ſhall propoſe to proportionate the expences to the revenue.

THE moſt ſcrupulous fidelity, and the moſt exact regularity in the public payments are eſſentially neceſſary for the ſupport of public credit: cuſtom has too great an aſcendancy over mankind, not to diſpoſe them to believe in the continuance of things they have experienced for any length of time. It would nevertheleſs be wrong to think, that exactneſs in the payments is alone ſufficient to deſtroy diffidence: if that maxim was generally true, France would not in 1759, 17~1, nor at ſome other epochas, have broken through its engagements; for it is only after having drained all its reſources, that government can ever reſolve on that deſperate ſtep: but when adminiſtration is ſeen to follow a wrong line of conduct, then fear precedes the delay, or ſuſpenſion of the pay-

payments; and when that happens, it is much rather the reſult of diſcredit, than the cauſe of it.

THE operations of the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*, or diſcounting bank, being limited within reaſonable bounds, are infinitely uſeful to public credit, not only becauſe the moderate price of diſcount on commercial paper has an influence on the general rate of intereſt; but alſo becauſe certainty of eaſily finding money by means of letters of exchange, prevents many of thoſe temporary embarraſſments which often determine a ſtockholder to ſell his ſtock in a hurry.

THE royal exchequer muſt alſo by provident care be well ſtored with ſpecie, that it may be ready on the inſtant, to furniſh the neceſſary reſources, to apply to that momentary abatement in the circulation, which is ſo eaſily miſtaken for an embarraſſed ſituation of affairs: an opinion, which may ſometimes actually occaſion a real embarraſſment; eſpecially if it is allowed to ſtrengthen and ſpread itſelf.

A TARDINESS in the payments, an uncertainty of the preciſe day on which the annuitants are to come, to receive their money, the impolitic difficulties they meet with, unneceſſary forms, in ſhort, all that ſeems to indicate an intention of protracting the time, ought to be moſt carefully avoided; for it is eaſy to perceive, that a great number of individuals form their judgment, rather on notions familiar to them, than on profound reflection. In every thing indifferent in itſelf, the public ſatisfaction ſhould alſo be attended to, and the moſt agreeable modifications adopted: frequent errors would often be commited if ſuch particulars were ſlightly intruſted to a certain deſcription of ſubalterns, who too much in love with a minute diſplay of authority, would, through an indiſcreet zeal, dictate laws, and conditions to the freeſt of all ſentiments, namely that of confidence.

THERE are alſo other important concerns eſſential to public credit: in extraordinary emergencies recourſe muſt not be had, to ſeveral reſources of a ſimilar ſort,

to expedients of the ſame kind, nor to too great a number of agents; for the amount of the wants is by that means magnified to appearance, and a competitorſhip oppoſed to the ſucceſs of the intended arrangements, is thereby encouraged. It is more eſpecially neceſſary to direct the offer to be made of a rate of intereſt, in a ſkilful manner; leſs ſometimes for the ſake of the ſaving to be made, than for the advantage of not being obliged to offer too precipitately, ſuch conditions as might inſpire diffidence.

It is alſo requiſite, during a war whoſe future duration is unknown, to reſerve the moſt attracting loans, for the moſt critical moments: in ſhort, the total ſum of all theſe loans muſt be proportioned to the magnitude of the capital, that may be deſtined to be ſo employed.

The art of knowing how to diſcover that magnitude is a very important one: and an eſſential error in that eſtimate would be ſufficient to diſcredit a loan, even at the moment when the public confidence ſhould

be greateſt. The reaſon is, that the ſucceſs of a loan is always uncertain, unleſs it be rapidly ſubſcribed to: the moſt trifling delay is interpreted in an unfavourable manner; in that caſe, every one wiſhes to deliberate, and to be incited by the example of others; men reciprocally wait for one another, and that ſtate of ſupineneſs increaſing the general diſtruſt, the uncertainty in which monied men are plunged, becomes a real diſcouragement: then, it is, that the miniſter of the finances is juſtly accuſed of having adopted wrong meaſures and of being deceived in his calculations: but it is alſo peculiarly remarkable, that though ſuch an error clearly manifeſts the unſkilfulneſs of the miniſter, it is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh the prudence of another, who having adopted better arrangements, cauſes the public to be earneſtly deſirous of ſubſcribing to the loan he propoſes; for then the ſubſcriptions are at firſt ſo numerous and ſurpaſs ſo much the ſum to be borrowed, that one might be tempted to think the miniſter was not acquainted with the extent of the public confidence. But this error proceeds only from not diſtinguiſh-

guiſhing between what is really ſubſcribed by men of real property, and what is taken up by mere ſtockjobbers, a certain deſcription of perſons, who intereſt themſelves in the public funds ſolely with the deſign of ſelling again after a ſtated time. Now, we may take notice that when a freſh loan is to be filled, theſe ſpeculators, either ſtand forward with eagerneſs, or entirely retire, in proportion to the magnitude of that loan.

LET us ſuppoſe, to render this propoſition more ſenſible, that fifty millions of livres are wanted by the ſtate, and the capital deſtined by monied men to be ſubſcribed in a loan, amounts to the ſame ſum: if that loan is limited to forty millions, it is poſſible that there may be offers made of nearly double that ſum; for then, a great many perſons of the claſs of ſpeculators will calculate, that if the real exigencies of the ſtate ſurpaſs the new loan by one fourth, it will ſoon be a competition which will conſiderably raiſe it. And on the contrary, if the loan is for fifty millions, whilſt forty are only neceſſary, there will perhaps be no hurry to

ſubſcribe, from the fear of ſeeing the new fund lower in its price, and alſo from the expectation of being able to purchaſe it on more advantageous terms.

UNDOUBTEDLY, neither the ſpeculators who enter into ſuch combinations, nor the miniſter who dictates the ſum, and the conditions of a loan, form ſuch preciſe calculations as are pointed out in the preceding paragraph: for the informations they ſhould be founded on, cannot be collected together, and are themſelves conjectural: but a more or leſs looſe opinion may be formed on that ſubject, and ſomewhat ſimilar to that by which the price of merchandize is regulated in all markets, and the command given ſometimes to the ſeller and ſometimes to the purchaſer.

THESE reflections may alſo ſerve to correct an error in which we are ſometimes liable to fall, when we hear the public loans of England mentioned. There it is a conſtant cuſtom with the miniſtry to get theſe loans filled by the means of ſubſcriptions, that is to ſay, they are entirely

ly diſtributed amongſt a few rich ſpeculators, who ſell them afterwards: and as care is taken to regulate the conditions of theſe loans in ſuch a manner as to afford the hopes of a reaſonable profit, it ſo happens, that when a loan for five millions ſterling is opened, it is reported, that the ſubſcriptions amount to twelve, or fifteen, and it is inferred from thence, that government having refuſed ten millions it is certain to find them again at command; but the error of this method of judging will become evident by recollecting the above obſervations. The ſubſcription for fifteen millions does not repreſent the quantity of money which wealthy people really intend placing in that loan; but only the collective maſs of the perſons who wiſh to be concerned in a profitable ſpeculation. That ſubſcription would perhaps be ſtill greater, if the loan was leſs conſiderable, and if on the contrary, it was of ten millions inſtead of five, perhaps, nobody would ſubſcribe.

WHAT is then, the moſt perfect calculation for a loan? In what conſiſts the

ſkill of the miniſter? It conſiſts in fixing the ſum of the loan, and regulating its conditions in ſuch a proportion, that every one may wiſh for a ſhare in it; and at the ſame time, that the profit of the ſpeculators may be as ſmall as poſſible; that attention is eſſential not only to avoid making uſeleſs ſacrifices, in order to promote the ſucceſs of the loan, but likewiſe, to cauſe the public eagerneſs to appear to be the effect of its confidence, and to prevent its limits being ever aſcertained.

NEITHER is it a matter of ſmall moment with reſpect to the ſucceſs of the loans made in France, to open them before the loans of England are made public, that thoſe foreigners who purchaſe both in the French and Engliſh funds, may not have diſpoſed of their money.

I muſt obſerve likewiſe, that if on the one hand, it is advantageous for a government that enjoys a very extenſive public credit, to multiply the number of government

ment bonds, payable to the bearer, the better to accelerate the circulation of ſpecie, an entirely different ſyſtem muſt be adopted, when that public credit is unſettled, and muſt be re-eſtabliſhed; for the facility with which theſe bonds may be bought and ſold, renders their price much more liable to various fluctuations; and as the current exchange at which they are negotiated is daily made public, a falling in the price, which may often be owing to tranſitory circumſtances, may create anxiety and be the occaſion of a diſcredit whoſe ſole cauſe will be the force of example. Theſe motives of alarm muſt therefore be avoided as long as mens minds are in ſuſpenſe and eaſy to be diſcouraged. I am convinced, that if at an early period of my adminiſtration, I had deviated from this rule, by increaſing the bonds payable to bearer, that error alone would have been ſufficient to raiſe embarraſſments, and to put a ſtop to the progreſs of public confidence.

Of all kinds of obligations payable to bearer, lottery tickets are thoſe that are leaſt ſubject to a revolution in their price; pro-

provided, however, their number be prudently limited: it has been remarked that this ſort of ſtock is ſoon diſtributed among a great many, and thoſe who poſſeſs them do not generally care to ſell them: they are even often kept in the midſt of the greateſt diſtruſt, becauſe they are rather looked on as a means of throwing ourſelves in the way of fortune, which no one willingly gives up, than as a fund in which money has been placed. Loans made on ſuch a principle are not like thoſe lotteries in which the whole of the ſtake is riſked, and which are a real game at hazard: but in thoſe loans made by government which we now mention, it is, as it were, the overplus of the intereſt that is converted into different chances: ſuch a game has nothing reprehenſible in it, and diffuſes without any prejudice, the pleaſures reſulting from hope.

CHANCE has the effect of multiplying every thing; becauſe every one attains, through the means of his imagination, to all the poſſible enjoyment reſulting from eaſy circumſtances; but if for that very rea-

reaſon, it is ſometimes diſcreet to put to the hazard of a fortunate ticket, what is the object of every man's deſire, thoſe lotteries where nothing but hardſhips are to be gained, ſuch as drawing lots for the militia, are the moſt fatal ideas that government ever conceived.

I SHOULD alſo have committed a great error with reſpect to public credit; if by following preceding examples, I had propoſed to the King to ſuſpend the reimburſements: for by ſparing that expence to the royal exchequer, the ideas of its being embarraſſed would have been ſtarted, and freſh loans would not have met with a ſubſcription.

BESIDES, the poſſibility of being paid off, like all other chances, preſents an idea, which gives encouragement, and the ſatisfaction that reſults from it, is more than equivalent to the ſums employed to produce ſo advantageous an impreſſion, in favour of public credit.

It is alſo my opinion, that even during a war, reimburſements ought never to be ſuſpended, untill that fatal aera, when every kind of confidence being deſtroyed, whilſt at the ſame time, the exigencies of the ſtate are as urgent as ever, government is forced as it were, to graſp at any thing, that may retard though for a moment, the dreaded ſhipwreck.

But though it is important not to interrupt the courſe of thoſe reimburſements for which the Sovereign ſtands engaged, that ſpecies of loan in which the profit of the lender is more eſpecially founded on a future reimburſement of his capital ought to be carefully avoided, in critical conjunctures; for, in that caſe, very little dependance is ſet on theſe promiſes.

The loan for two hundred millions of livres opened in December 1782, is a recent proof of the truth of this aſſertion: it was very profitable for the ſubſcribers, for they received an intereſt of ten livres for one hundred and ſixty, reimburſable at the rate of

of two hundred: but the moment not being adapted to inſpire confidence in that reimburſement, the loan was not filled; and if peace had not been made, the conſequences of that erroneous ſcheme would have been experienced in a very fatal manner.

I MUST alſo adviſe miniſters carefully to avoid paying contractors with negotiable bills: for being in a hurry to convert them into money to enter upon freſh ſpeculations, they very often ſell them under their real value. I have clearly ſeen the danger of ſuch operations, and if I had not oppoſed them with great vigour, theſe bills would have fallen into ſuch a degree of diſcredit, as to render it difficult to be retrieved.

IN ſhort, what contributes in the moſt efficacious manner to the ſucceſs of a loan, is the rapidity of the circulation; and as that word is often employed by people, who have perhaps never formed a diſtinct idea of it, I think it is no indifferent object to explain the real ſenſe of it:

it: and I ſhall afterwards point out to what degree the adminiſtration of the finances in France, may promote a greater activity in that circulation.

THE ſpecie of a country is employed in two very different ways: one part is continually made uſe of as the medium of barter; and is daily employed to purchaſe the neceſſaries and luxuries of life: it is with that part of the circulating ſpecie, that the value of labour and of merchandize is paid for throughout the kingdom, in the different markets, manufactories, and trading places. Specie, conſidered under that view, is ſubject to a continual rotation, occaſioned by our daily exigencies, and is as conſtant as they are. This then is the firſt branch of the circulation of ſpecie: government has no ſort of influence over it, neither ſhould it wiſh to have any.

IT is impoſſible to aſcertain what proportion of the ſpecie of a country is employed in the barters above mentioned: we may only eaſily conceive that its amount

amount muſt become greater, in proportion to the riſe in the price of commodities: and we find likewiſe, that the greater the population of the ſtate, the more conſiderable muſt be the quantity of ſpecie employed in the daily commercial exchanges.

If each individual in France, of all ages, and of both ſexes, had continually in his purſe, or cheſt, ninety livres, ſet a-part for the acquiſition of the various commodities he might want, all the ſpecie in the kingdom would be employed in that ſervice, and would be of no other uſe than to facilitate the keeping of accounts. *

Undoutedey, a conſiderable number of individuals lay aſide much more than ninety livres, either to ſupply their actual expences; or to make their minds eaſy,

* Ninety livres multiplied by twenty-four millions, ſix hundred and ſeventy-ſix thouſand ſouls, the total of the inhabitants of France, will produce two thouſand, two hundred and twenty millions, eight hundred and forty thouſand livres, which is nearly the ſum of the ſpecie circulating in the kingdom.

or

or to ſatisfy their avarice: but a much greater proportion of individuals do not poſſeſs that ſum in ſpecie, and it is for that reaſon, that in France, as well as in all rich countries, there is always a great ſum of money, over and above what is daily deſtined for neceſſary purchaſes.

This overplus compoſes that part of the ſpecie that may be applied to uſeful ſpeculations, and is laid out either in the loans made by the ſtate, or by individuals, or in all ſorts of enterpriſes: thus the circulation whoſe rapid courſe intereſts public credit, is that which collects into the hands of monied men, from all parts of the kingdom, all the ſpecie unneceſſary to thoſe multiplied operations, that are the reſult of the expences of the ſtate, and of the collective inhabitants of the kingdom.

If the money borrowed by a government was to be continually employed in paying off its debt, it might go on borrowing for ever; for the money received from one ſet of monied men being paid to another, that deſcription of individuals would continually have

have in hand, the ſame ſums to diſpoſe of.

But there is a great difference between what really happens, and what would be the caſe, were the above ſuppoſition to be realized: for the ſucceſſive loans in time of war, being deſtined for the extraordinary exigencies of the ſtate, the money they produce cannot be employed in reimburſements, and thereby circulate from one ſet of monied men to another: government is forced to diſtribute this money to ſeveral departments, for the pay, the ſalaries and ſubſiſtence of its troops, for the hoſpitals, and proviſions of all ſorts; in ſhort, for numberleſs different uſes: and it is thus diſperſed, through infinite channels, from the capital, to the very frontiers of the kingdom.

This money ſo diſtributed enables ſome to continue their expences on the ſame footing, and others to increaſe them: ſome individuals begin to make ſavings with that money, whilſt others are on the eve of diſpoſing of it in ſome ſpeculation.

But in ſuch a kingdom as France, the ſpecie muſt neceſſarily be a long time in circulation, before the immenſe ſums that are thus diſperſed through the nation can be again collected in the hands of monied men, and more eſpecially of thoſe who reſide at Paris, and who till very lately were the only perſons in the kingdom, that had any intereſt in the public funds.

THESE reflections will account for the magnitude and rapidity of the loans made in England, above thoſe made in France; even in the moments in which this laſt kingdom enjoyed the greateſt public confidence: and this circumſtance is ſo much the more extraordinary as the whole of the ſpecie in England, including the notes of the bank of England, which are as current as money, ſcarcely amounted ten years ago, to a ſum equal to one half of the ſpecie now circulating in France.

THE cauſe of this ſurpriſing facility of making loans, of which England has in the laſt war given examples more ſtriking than ever, muſt not be ſolely attributed

to

to the extent of the public confidence; I am convinced that with the ſame public credit, that kingdom would not have been able to make theſe loans, if the wonderful activity of the circulation of ſpecie had not exiſted; or, in order to explain this idea more diſtinctly; if the money paid into the royal exchequer in conſequence of theſe loans, and immediately after diſtributed among the various departments charged with the public expences, had not quickly returned into the hands of monied men, who were thereby enabled to lend it again the year following; now the rapidity of that circulation depends upon peculiar cauſes. In the firſt place, it is undoubtedly owing to the habitual and general uſe made of paper money, which cauſes the payments to be made throughout all the kingdom, as quickly as the mails can travel. Secondly, to the ſmaller extent of Great Britain. Thirdly, to the re-union in London of almoſt all the ſpecie; that city being at once a ſea-port, the capital of the kingdom, the chief trading-town, and the place where almoſt all the exchange operations are made. Fourthly, to

the cuſtom which all merchants, and other men of property regularly obſerve, to keep little or no money in their houſes, but to have it in the hands of bankers, who receive no kind of ſalary for their trouble, but who are tacitly allowed to make the beſt of the money they have in truſt; inſomuch, that a multiplicity of ſmall ſums which in the hands of other individuals would bring no intereſt, forms a ſufficiently conſiderable capital for theſe bankers, to enable them to reap an advantage from the immediate employment of it.

In ſhort, this rapidity in the circulation depends alſo very eſſentially on a continual and unſhaken confidence in the public funds, and on the facility with which they may, to the preſent hour, be immediately converted into money, by ſeveral methods, all of which are tolerated by government, as being ſo many means of encouraging the activity of this ſingular branch of commerce.

It appears to me, that theſe are the principal circumſtances which accelerate circulation, the rapidity of which is ſo eſſential to the frequency of public loans. If the journal of that circulation could be exactly aſcertained, we ſhould perhaps find, that whilſt in France, the produce of the loans that government diſtributes in the acquittal of the public expences, remains two or three years in circulation, before it returns into the hands of the monied men, the ſame return is accompliſhed in England, in the courſe of one year; ſo that, under that ſuppoſition, the facility of making loans in England ought to bear almoſt a ſimilar proportion to that which would be found, in a country where the produce of the loans ſhould be wholly deſtined to the reimburſement of the public debt.

All theſe various circumſtances cauſe the increaſe of public wealth in England, whether that increaſe proceeds from commerce, or the fortunes accumulated in the Eaſt Indies, or any other ſource; to be looked on as ſo much freſh ſtock that

will ſoon augment the ſum of the capital deſtined for the public loans.

SOME of the reaſons that contribute to the rapidity of the circulation in England, proceed more eſpecially from its ſituation, the form of its government and the cuſtoms of the country. Now, though the adminiſtration of the finances of France, may by its attention increaſe the rapidity of circulation, ſo important to the ſtate, it is however, liable to ſome diſadvantages which cannot be ſurmounted.

SUCH is, for example, the immenſe circumference of the kingdom, which occaſions a more extenſive diſperſion of the money procured by public loans, and afterwards employed in various neceſſary expences; ſuch is the ſituation of its metropolis, which prevents its becoming the centre of an extenſive comerce: ſuch is likewiſe, the cuſtom we adhere to in France, of keeping our own money, or of depoſiting it in the hands of notaries, who would forfeit their characters if they were not to preſerve it in its natural ſtate: beſides

ſides, it would be very difficult to prevent thoſe who make theſe depoſits from being alarmed, if the notaries were to make a profitable uſe of the funds in their hands, and it would be really dangerous to truſt our fortunes in the hands of private caſhiers, as long as we are not able to find, as in England, individuals worth millions of money, intirely devoted to that profeſſion; and this muſt never be expected in a country, where as ſoon as a man is poſſeſſed of ten, or twelve thouſand pounds, he dreams of nothing but ennobling himſelf and his poſterity, and riſing a ſtep higher in the ſocial order.*.

LASTLY, the laws and public manners in France, forbid in the commerce of the public funds, all ſtock-jobbing, fictitious bargains; in ſhort, all the manoeuvres of the ſtock exchange in London, which are only tolerated through policy in England, becauſe the activity of that ſpecies of cir-

* The diſcounting bank is become a general banking-houſe, but hitherto only merchants and tradeſmen have made uſe of it for their receipts, and payments.

culation is looked on as favourable to the loans; and the facility of borrowing is deemed the principal reſource of the ſtate.

ALL theſe various circumſtances, ſome of which it is impoſſible to change, and others at leaſt very difficult, will always render the circulation of the ſpecie in France, much ſlower and longer in its courſe than in England. Adminiſtration muſt therefore limit its endeavours to vivify and accelerate that circulation by prudent and moderate methods, analogous to the manners, the cuſtoms, and the nature of its government. It might, for example, ſuppreſs or leſſen the number of offices where the ſpecie is always obliged to remain for a ſhort ſpace, ſuch as thoſe of Receivers, Paymaſters, Treaſurers, &c. The multiplicity of Caſhiers and Treaſurers of the King's money ſerves only to diſperſe that money in ſeveral places, and in a greater number of hands; whilſt on the contrary, it ought to be accumulated in the royal exchequer, for the ſame reaſons that I have given to demonſtrate the advantage that reſults from the

the re-union of the money of individuals, in the hands of Engliſh bankers.

ADMINISTRATION ought alſo to cauſe the times of payment into the royal exchequer, to anſwer to the time of collection, that the money may not be a moment in a ſtate of ſtagnation: it muſt likewiſe take care to apply the collections of each generality to the expences incurred in theſe provinces, inſtead of negotiating reſcriptions on theſe provinces, in advance, from circumſtances of embarraſſment, a reſtriction will by that method be laid on the tranſport of money from the country to the metropolis, and from the metropolis to the country. The miniſter of the finances may alſo hinder the ſtagnation in the royal exchequer, of thoſe funds not immediately wanted, by deſtining them in the mean time, to diſcounting operations favourable to circulation.

IT would likewiſe be advantageous to encourage and ſupport the eſtabliſhment of diſcounting bank, that merchants being af-

aſſured of finding money at all times for their bills, may be releaſed from continually keeping a quantity of ſpecie at home, to guard againſt events; and alſo that the notes of that bank being received in payment, leſs ſpecie might be daily employed in thoſe payments, and the ſum of money applicable to uſeful enterprizes be thereby augmented.

NEITHER would it be a matter of indifference, to promote the coinage of ſilver ſpecie rather than that of gold; becauſe the latter encourages the ſpirit of accumulation, being eaſier to conceal: the truth of this aſſertion cannot be doubted, when we ſee the extreme ſcarcity of gold coin in France, whilſt from the calculations made at the mints, we may preſume that it amounts to above eight hundred millions of livres.

IF loans for a determined ſpace of time and on obligatory bonds were rendered ſuſceptible of intereſt, that would be another means to promote the activity of circulation; all ſhackles impoſed on the vari-

various arrangements ſuitable to the convenience of each individual, are ſo many delays to the rapidity of the circulation of money: for we are apt to leave our money in a longer ſtate of ſtagnation when we do not eaſily find means to lay it out, in the manner that beſt ſuits our ſpeculations, or the diſpoſition of our affairs. Such a legiſlation would beſides be very conformable to ſtrict juſtice: for the rate of intereſt is only the repreſentation of the profit made by the borrower, by uſing the capital of the lender: now, whether this profit be limited to a ſhort number of years, or the time of the loan be indefinite, the indemnification given for that profit is not leſs lawful, and the ſpirit of the contract ſtill remains the ſame.

THERE are ſtill other diſpoſitions proper to accelerate circulation; but as their importance is not ſo great, I ſhall not extend theſe reflections any farther. I ſhall only obſerve, that farmers and proprietors of ſmall landed eſtates, poſſeſſing individually little ſums of money that never produce any intereſt, and which neverthe-

leſs would form collectively, a conſiderable capital, it might be profitable to preſent them with an eaſy method of making a certain profit on that money: I had in conſequence conceived, that at the concluſion of the war, and upon occaſions where the provinces of the ſtates, and the provincial aſſemblies might have ſome uſeful work in view, it might be proper to engage them to make a trial of a loan calculated to attain by imperceptible ſteps, the political view I have juſt indicated. This loan was to have been paid for in bills payable to the bearer, theſe bills were to be for very ſmall ſums, from two hundred, to five hundred livres, and the intereſt was to be paid only, in the capital of each province. I ſhould not wonder in caſe theſe bills were to become a provincial paper in univerſal eſtimation, that a certain circulation of money ſhould take place among that claſs of citizens, who generally bury under ground, the little ſavings they make.

LASTLY, that which excites above all things, a rapidity of circulation, is public con-

confidence, becauſe that confidence prevents the lenders from being in that ſtate of uncertainty, on which depends the longer, or ſhorter ſtagnation of money. Thus in proportion as the adminiſtration of the finances augments the public confidence, it accelerates circulation; and by accelerating circulation, it multiplies and revives the means of the lenders: thus it is, that there exiſts between public credit, and the rapidity of circulation of ſpecie, a ſort of action and re-action of the greateſt importance.

THE above remarks on the circulation of money may undoubtedly be conſidered under various points of view: but I muſt not quit this ſubject without returning again, to a reflection which it will always be my delight to attend to: and it is, that a diſcreet management of the intereſts of the nation is, even on this occaſion, connected with political views. I ſhall therefore obſerve, that moderation in the taxes promotes the lowering of the rate of intereſt: in fact, as I have already demonſtrated, if the ſpecie circulating in a country

may be divided into two parts, whereof one ſerves only to go to market with, and the other being in the hands of monied men is employed in diverſe operations that produce an intereſt, or ſome kind of profit; it is eaſy to conceive that in proportion as the price of the neceſſaries of life, is not raiſed by the taxes; in the ſame proportion, a leſs quantity of money will be neceſſary for the habitual expences; and then, from a very natural conſequence, that part of the ſpecie which is deſtined to be laid out in loans of every ſort, will become more conſiderable; and that part alone contributes, by its abundance, to the lowering of the rate of intereſt.

I MUST again mention, the meaſure of making public the ſtate of the finances, as one of the moſt powerful means of ſtrengthening public credit: I ſet the example, from whence there reſulted very great advantages; but as I have already had occaſion to dwell on this ſubject, in the introduction to this work, I ſhall not enlarge any farther on an idea whoſe importance and ſimplicity are equally felt.

Let

Let us only examine by what manner Great Britain ſupported its public credit in the midſt of the moſt alarming circumſtances: let us examine by what ſuccours it is able to raiſe, as it were, a weight above its natural ſtrength; and we ſhall find that it is indebted for ſome of theſe advantages to the general knowledge of the proportion that exiſts between its revenue and its expences, and to the notoriety of all its operations of government: it is that notoriety which puts a ſtop to the inordinate ſallies of ignorance, and ill-founded anxiety; which ſhews the remedy to be equal to the diſeaſe, and continually exhibits the extent of the obſtacles, and the magnitude of the reſources.

I NEED not repeat, that paying off part of the public debt, greatly contributes to the lowering of the rate of intereſt, provided an equal ſum be not borrowed at the ſame time; but, as I have already obſerved, the meaſure of theſe reimburſements muſt be determined with prudence, and it never ought to be forgotten, that they are made with the taxes paid by the people

people, and that it is alſo one of the duties of the ſovereign, to alleviate their burdens.

I HAVE hitherto ſpoken only of the general means of adminiſtration which ought to be employed in France, to maintain or retrieve public credit: but there is alſo a line of conduct which if adopted by the miniſter of the finances, will produce a good effect after a ſtated ſpace of time: this conduct is often ſilently diſplayed; but it is nevertheleſs applicable to numberleſs particulars that are all important. The adminiſtration of the finances requires a continual prudence, attention, and diſcernment, which often paſſes unnoticed, and the merit of which is not known until a different adminiſtration ſucceeds, and, as it were, rouſes us from our lethargic indifference.

IT does not ſuffice, in matters of adminiſtration, to do well: errors muſt likewiſe be avoided: we run the riſk of committing them every inſtant: it even happens very often, that a firſt error induces

us

us into others, ſo eaſy is the chain to be formed: and ſo watchful is private intereſt over the ſervants of the public, to lead them aſtray, in order to reap ſome advantages from their miſtakes.

And yet there is ſcarcely any thing which ought to be indifferent to the miniſter who deſires to preſerve public credit, and to have an influence over the minds of men: for even the calmneſs of his diſcourſe, and the equality of his addreſs, will by degrees have ſome effect on the confidence of the public. He muſt avoid appearing over anxious, or raſhly confident: he ought to prepare all his arrangements in ſuch a manner as to be enabled to depend continually on truth: then he may give himſelf up to his natural emotions, or at leaſt forbear being ſo very watchful over his own actions: then he no longer needs to reflect before he delivers his ſentiments; and he is exempt from the laborious attention of continually endeavouring to conciliate his converſation with his political opinions; the art of which conciliation is ſo

very fatiguing to underſtand, and ſo difficult to adhere to.

A MINISTER has gone a very great length, when he is arrived at that period, when the public begin to look on his words, as the faithful ſymbols of his thoughts and he has defeated a very dangerous enemy, when by means of an exact circumſpection both in what he does, and what he ſays, he prevents imagination from exerciſing its vagaries againſt him.

VAIN boaſting in public affairs has a ſimilar effect to that produced by extravagant ideas, or an inordinate uſe of ſuperlatives in our ſtyle, which is almoſt always the very reverſe to that which the orator wiſhed to promote; for when that is the caſe, the auditors diſpleaſed with his endeavours to force upon them a conviction of more than what they really were prepared to receive favourably, loſe their patience, and will not even allow to truth what it has a right to demand. In the ſame manner, thoſe who are in an active line, thoſe who write on any ſubject what-

whatever, in ſhort, all thoſe who deſire to influence opinions, or to perſuade, cannot too much reflect on the power of imagination, nor attend too carefully to the propereſt means of captivating it, or of forming a ſtrict alliance with it.

It may likewiſe be ſaid with reaſon, that all honeſt and prudent operations in matters of adminiſtration, however foreign they may be to the affairs of finance, have an influence on public credit: the nation likes to ſee whatever is an indication of zeal and of attentiveneſs to the public concerns: by that favourable impreſſion it is diſpoſed to confidence; it becomes perſuaded that it is under the care of a good watchman, and every ſpecies of diſcontent grows calmer, and weaker every day. Perhaps public opinion is like the ſentiments of the ſoul, which often owe their origin and progreſs much leſs to noble actions, and generous ſacrifices, than to thoſe habitual attentions and unprepared emotions that ſeem rather to belong to inclination, and the inſpiration of nature. In the ſame manner, confidence in a mi-

niſter arrives by degrees, and it acquires as much ſtrength, from a ſeries of actions without oſtentation, and a line of conduct the particulars of which bear a relation to each other, and ſeem to be connected by the ſame ſpirit, as from the arrangements, and general laws, that are the reſult of reflection.

THERE is likewiſe another very important truth, which deſerves notice; if the actions of one man in a high ſtation gain him reputation, another man may ſometimes perſonally give reputation to his actions; for there are very few public arrangements, and more eſpecially, in the adminiſtration of the finances, that may not be ſeen under different points of view, and it happens very often, that they are approved of or cenſured, according to the opinion we have of the miniſter to whom they owe their origin.

LASTLY, and it is very fortunate to be able to ſay it, the moral character of the Sovereign has the greateſt influence over public credit: the idea formed of his probity, of his love of order, of his perſonal diſguſt

to

ſuperfluous expences, and inconſiderable prodigalities, becomes a valuable opinion, which at all times ſeconds the public confidence: thoſe miniſters who are recommendable by their conduct, are ſo much the more dear to the nation, as they recall to mind the virtues of the Sovereign: and thoſe whoſe adminiſtration is found fault with, at leaſt do not deſtroy the hopes of a better.

CHAP. XXII.

ON THE GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT FORMED AT PARIS, INSTEAD OF PAWN-BROKERS, AND COMMONLY CALLED, MONT-DE-PIÉTÉ.

USURY bears no reſemblance whatever to the ordinary tranſactions of ſociety, in which both lenders and borrowers being equal in number, and having ſimilar concerns, treat together about the price of money, and are indiſtinctly ſubjected to the effects of thoſe univerſal conſiderations, which determine the rate of intereſt.

USURY is never applied but to peculiar ſituations; it is an abuſe of ſtrength againſt weak-

weakneſs: it is a ſway exerciſed by avarice and cupidity, over a claſs of men, whom the delirium of the paſſions deprive of the means of defending themſelves; it is a ſnare laid againſt youth, gamblers, and all thoſe who being governed by the preſent moment, are totally regardleſs of the future: ſo that in like manner as minors, or idiots are not allowed to enter into any legal contracts, uſurious bargains ought likewiſe to be prohibited, becauſe theſe agreements almoſt always indicate that one of the contracting parties is incapacitated either by his blindneſs, or by the derangement of his affairs. It would be therefore entirely repugnant to ſound morals, to tolerate in civilized ſocieties, thoſe hard-hearted and deſpicable men, who ſecretly lie in wait for the victims that imprudence, or bad conduct may bring to their altars.

But neither the laws againſt uſury, nor the puniſhments inflicted on thoſe who were found guilty of it, were ſufficient to ſtop its progreſs in the capital, and it was impoſſible to be any longer blind to the inſurmountable obſtacles which oppoſed a re-

formation; for in proportion as adminiſtration became more vigilant, the uſurers increaſed their precautions to conceal their criminal traffic, under forms to appearance legal. It was then become neceſſary to oppoſe a new ſpecies of impediment to this depravity; and the inſtitution of the Mount of Piety, determined on in the month of December 1777, ſeemed to be actually pointed out by the circumſtances of the caſe: this eſtabliſhment undoubtedly has its inconveniencies; but the obſcure negotiations, the ſources of which it has dried up, occaſioned abuſes of much greater conſequence.

THE conditions of the loans made upon pledges by the Mount of Piety, are nearly equivalent to an intereſt of *ten per cent.* per annum; I own, this is a conſiderable ſacrifice for the borrowers: and yet, if the certainty and facility of ſuch a reſource has freed them from the tyranny of uſurers, who not only required from *twenty*, to *thirty* per cent, but alſo taught youth the art of concealing their want of conduct; the Mount of Piety conſidered under that

view has produced the greateſt advantages. It ſometimes becomes a matter of obligation to enter into terms with the errors and paſſions of men: and that inſtitution which might be liable to criticiſm, if its effects were conſidered apart, muſt be judged of in a different manner, when we examine the nature and magnitude of the inconveniences which the ſame eſtabliſhment has prevented.

But it will be aſked, why was not the Mount of Piety compelled to make advances at a more moderate intereſt; this objection is eaſily removed: it was becauſe, in that caſe, the number of perſons who would have had recourſe to theſe facilities, would not have been any longer proportioned to the meaſure of the reſources that could be ſpared for this eſtabliſhment. With limited means, an indefinite end muſt not be had in view: immenſe capitals would be requiſite to lend money on pledges in Paris, if the conditions of theſe loans were to be nearly ſimilar to the common rate of intereſt: the Mount of Piety was not deſtined for an undertaking of that extent; it was only intended

tended to provide through its channel, againſt thoſe unforeſeen and urgent exigencies which obliged men to have recourſe to burdenſome expedients, ſuſceptible of an infinity of abuſes. After all, the charges of ſo vaſt and complicated a management as that of the mount of Piety, are neceſſarily very conſiderable; ſo that although the ſum of the advances made by that eſtabliſhment in the courſe of one year, amounts at preſent to about fifteen millions of livres, the profit over and above the intereſt of the capital, does not riſe to one hundred and fifty thouſand livres. This profit devolves to the general hoſpital, which arrangement ſtill leſſens the inconveniences attached to the foundation of the Mount of Piety.

I DO not however believe it would be proper to form ſuch eſtabliſhments in the other towns of the kingdom: ſuch precautions ought to be conſidered as a mitigation of abuſes that cannot be prevented; but in all places, where the juriſdiction of the police is not too extenſive, it is an eaſy matter to deſtroy the profeſſion of uſurers, or at leaſt to reſtrain their traffick within known

known limits. It is alſo in the hurry and luxury of a great metropolis only, that the depravity of morals enforces ſome indulgences, and a kind of confederacy with thoſe vices, it is impoſſible to eradicate: elſewhere the remedy would only ſtart the idea of the diſeaſe; and by wiſhing to prevent the inconveniences of a diſorder ſtill in its infancy, perhaps a dangerous extenſion might be given to it: men, in the eyes of a general adminiſtration, are but children, and the principles of a prudent education often ſeem to be applicable to the relation that exiſts between the ſovereign, and the ſubjects under his guardian care.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

OBSERVATIONS ON LIFE ANNUITIES.

LOANS made upon life-annuities cannot be rationally approved, nor yet blamed, without examining at the ſame time, the ſtate of public credit, and the power of government to levy money by any other method. The neceſſity of having recourſe to reſources the inconveniences of which are known, muſt be reckoned among the calamities attending war; and it is in the calm of peace, that government ſhould put itſelf in the moſt proper ſituation to be leſs ſubjected to the influence of circumſtances.

Bonds

Bonds for perpetual annuities on the town houſe of Paris, receiving four per cent. intereſt, ſold for only ſixty per cent. before the preparations for the laſt war; thus, monied men could place their capitals at the rate of ſix and two-thirds per cent. beſides acquiring ſtock for a thouſand livres, by diſburſing only ſix hundred. It will be eaſily conceived, that if in times of peace, money could be laid out on ſuch profitable terms, it was impoſſible to raiſe conſiderable capitals, in the midſt of war, by borrowing only on annuities either perpetual, or to be paid off at a very diſtant time: unleſs government had conſented to conditions, the extravagance of which would ſoon have annihilated all public credit. However, I found means to procure conſiderable ſums for the King, at *five* and *ſix* per cent. intereſt; but it was by making uſe of the mediation of the ſtates, the towns, the clergy, and other bodies, that enjoy a credit peculiar to themſelves, it was likewiſe by increaſing the public confidence in temporary loans, and ſupplying by the leſs, or more attracting chances of lotteries, what I wanted to

ſpare

on the rate of intereſt. But all theſe plans being inſufficient, I was obliged to have recourſe to loans on life annuities: they were granted under my miniſtry, and in the midſt of war; in the firſt place at *nine per cent.* on one life, then at *ten*, and at *nine* again, after the publication of the account given to the King. Loans had never been made in France at a lower rate of intereſt, even in times of peace: and government ought certainly to conſider it as very important not to be obliged to deviate from the uſual proportion, ſince by that method, the public confidence was ſupported. The reſource of life annuities, procured alſo another advantage, namely, government was releaſed from the neceſſity of multiplying thoſe bonds which are liable to a daily ſale: and that kind of ſtock being every day to be found on the exchange, becomes the thermometer of public credit: thus, at times, in which it is neceſſary to re-eſtabliſh the public confidence, and in which it muſt be ſupported againſt the anxieties inſpired by war, we muſt carefully avoid expoſing in any manner, the opinions of the lenders, to the chance

chance of the variations that neceſſarily happen in the price of negotiable ſtock, when its quantity is too great. However, as it is not the leſs true, that life annuities, whether conſidered as probable calculations on the ordinary courſe of human life, or regarded in a moral point of view, are liable to certain inconveniences, I was always of opinion that peaceful times, were to be employed in ſuch a prudent manner, that on the unhappy renewal of war, great ſums might be raiſed by the ſole method of borrowing on perpetual, or reimburſable annuities. This is in fact, the end that ought to be had in view: but if we were to fix our attention ſolely on what is paſt, it would be right to conſider, that it was at leaſt very fortunate, to have provided for the immenſe charges of the laſt war, at a period, when even in time of peace, monied men could find means to lay out their property in a ſtock that yielded them an intereſt of *ſix* and *two thirds* per cent, in perpetual annuities.

I MUST likewiſe obſerve, that life-annuities are become more expenſive to the King,

ſince they are no longer ſought for, only as a means of increaſing our revenue during our lives, or that of our children, but are alſo become an object of ſpeculation. This new cuſtom was firſt introduced at Geneva, and the example was followed in ſome other places: they make choice of thirty children about ſeven years old; at which age there is the greateſt probability of a long life; they take care not to receive into that number, thoſe whoſe health is in the leaſt precarious, or who have not got over the dangers of the ſmall-pox: they are even ſo careful as to give the preference to that ſex, whoſe ſedate life ſeems to be expoſed to fewer unforeſeen accidents; in ſhort, they adopt all the neceſſary precautions to aſſure the long exiſtence of theſe thirty individuals: then monied men lend whatever ſum they pleaſe on each life, and as theſe annuities are transferable, it will eaſily be conceived they find every kind of encouragement in the purſuit of theſe ſpeculations. To remedy this inconvenience, it would be neceſſary to allow a different rate of intereſt, according to the various ages of the annuitants, or to determine the ſum to be

be placed on each life: but ſuch conſtraints can only be laid, in proportion to the extent of public credit, and the meaſure of the exigencies of the State: it is then, by a wiſe and prudent conduct, much anterior to the time, when loans are indiſpenſably neceſſary, that government may acquire ſufficient ſtrength to reſtrain the demands of the lenders within juſt bounds, and to defeat their cunning.

CHAP. XXIV.

OF PATRIOTIC ASSISTANCE.

AFTER enlarging upon the various means of retrieving, or ſupporting public credit, it is perhaps incumbent on me, in order to complete my taſk, to hazard an idea on what ought to be done, in thoſe calamitous moments, in which public confidence is at a ſtand, the ſupportable taxes no longer capable of ſupplying the exigencies a ſingle campaign, and yet the intereſt of the ſtate, and the honour of the ſovereign require the continuance of war. We cannot conſider the offer of borrowing on the King's account, ſometimes made by the principal towns, or various corporate bodies, as an important reſource, nor even as a proof of patriotiſm: for ſuch facilities may at all times be depended upon, whenever government ſhall think proper to have recourſe

courſe to them: however, I muſt add, that if theſe loans are attended with an augmentation of taxes, the principal municipal officers are to be commended for their ſubmiſſion; but when they are the firſt to offer ſuch arrangements, then we cannot forbear obſerving, that they alone take the merit of officiouſneſs with government, whilſt the burden of the new taxes is ſupported by the people, who have not made them their commiſſioners; and one ought never to offer, or receive thanks for other people's property. The financial companies alſo ſometimes take the hints given them, and value themſelves on the gift or advance made of one, or two millions, under pretence of national zeal; but it is eaſy to perceive they are determined thereto by a political calculation; and ſuch ſacrifices on their part have often given birth to favours, or very burdenſome indemnifications from government: it is therefore never proper to treat in that manner, with theſe companies, nor indeed with any individual; and on this occaſion I am induced to quote the ſaying of an old Perſian Vizier, to whom preſents were brought, and laid before him: *Though thou expoſeth*

that which thou offereth unto me, it cannot conceal that which thou requireth from me.

NEITHER are ſimple gifts from individuals a rational reſource; an attempt was made to excite them towards the cloſe of the war, and a ſubſcription that was opened in the capital amounted, I believe, to two, or three thouſand louis d'ors, which government prudently refuſed to accept. It appears then to me, that a quite different method of having recourſe to the effects of patriotiſm ought to be adopted, when the diſpoſition of men's minds warrant its adoption, and when the low ſtate of public credit ſtops the courſe of ordinary means. Giving therefore a free ſcope to my imagination on this object, it appeared to me that, in order to make the moſt of the national zeal, and to eſtabliſh it in all its ſplendour, recourſe might be had to a loan of a new ſort, indeed, but the ſucceſs of which might perhaps be very great. This loan which ſhould deſerve the name of *patriotic loan*, ought to receive an intereſt of five per cent. whatever might be the price of the public funds. The nation ought to be invited to ſubſcribe to it, not under a view

view of ſpeculation, but rather through a ſentiment of public ſpirit: the payment of the intereſt ought to be moſt carefully ſecured, and the time of reimburſement indicated: the difficulties of the preſent moment ought more eſpecially to be made known, but nevertheleſs, the ſtate of the finances ſhould be repreſented in a favourable light; in ſhort, it might be demonſtrated, that in certain critical ſituations, all thoſe whoſe fortune is in any reſpect, connected with that of the ſtate, are peculiarly intereſted in the prevention of public diſtreſs. It might alſo, be proper always to let the lenders derive ſome merit, or honour from their zeal; and this might be effected, without oppoſing the inclination of the public for bonds payable to bearer; by inſerting in the negotiable notes, the name of the perſon who ſhould have ſubſcribed the ſum mentioned therein. It would alſo be right, to divide theſe notes into whatever ſmall ſums ſhould be required, in order to take advantage of the general zeal of the nation; and government would do well to eſtabliſh receiving-offices in the chief towns of each province, that the various inha-

bitants of the kingdom might ſhare in this negotiation. Yet after all this exertion we may plainly perceive, that the national zeal would not conſiſt in gratuitous gifts, but in a loan at a moderate rate of intereſt; and as even that moderation of intereſt, as well as the end and nature of the loan, would increaſe the public confidence, I am led to think, that ſuch an arrangement would meet with very great ſucceſs, under an adminiſtration both loved and eſteemed: but I own likewiſe, that the ſame experiment would be irrational, dangerous, and perhaps abſurd, if the temper of the nation was differently diſpoſed.

HOWEVER, the ſucceſs of ſuch a loan might not be limited to that period alone, when the nation ſhould be animated by a ſentiment of love and confidence in adminiſtration, I believe the ſame idea might likewiſe be applied to thoſe calamitous circumſtances, in which the defence of the kingdom, imminent dangers, and other general misfortunes ſhould unite every opinion, and every intereſt in the formation of one univerſal public ſpirit.

THUS,

Thus, when towards the latter end of his reign, Lewis XIV. ſaw his kingdom in the utmoſt danger; when his haughty foes dared to dictate the moſt diſgraceful conditions, as the price of the peace he demanded; in ſhort, when that great monarch juſtly irritated, was preparing to march in perſon at the head of his nobility; if at that moment, he had opened a national and patriotic loan to provide for the exigencies of an indiſpenſably neceſſary campaign, I have not the leaſt doubt but, in ſpite of the diſorder and diffidence of thoſe times, the French nation inſpired with a generous emotion, would have emulated each other, in ſubſcribing to that loan, and the more ſo, as the ſovereign might have joined to the motives of attachment for his perſon and of intereſt for his glory, all the encouragements that depend on the deſire of diſtinction, and of praiſe: and which are ſo powerful when the ſovereign chuſes to ſet them in motion. He would have deſired daily to view the liſt of the lenders; he would perhaps have ordered the regiſter of that loan to be depoſited in the archives of the Louvre, to ſerve as a

precious monument of the love of his people; and he would undoubtedly have incited his ſucceſſors to protect ſuch creditors in a peculiar manner, by ſhewing them, what honour and good policy dictated to them. In ſhort, it is an eaſy matter to repreſent to ourſelves the affecting language that might have been uſed in ſuch circumſtances, by a ſovereign, who joined to the auguſt ſplendour of his throne, and perſon, the intereſt and reſpect inſpired by his misfortunes, his old age, and the remembrance of his former grandeur: laſtly, if in his concern for the diſaſters of his kingdom, he had manifeſted any regret for the time he had employed in ſecuring the happineſs of his ſubjects, and at the ſame time, had expreſſed his reliance on their zeal and devotion, it is probable no ſpecies of reſource whatever would have been left untried, in conſequence of a general union of ſelf-intereſt, with patriotic zeal. Ye monarchs of ſo great and generous a nation, be conſcious of your felicity, and be acquainted with your ſtrength! Increaſe that inexhauſtible treaſure by means of a prudent and

tender

tender concern for your people, and never forget, that in a kingdom abounding with wealth, public confidence, and national felicity, will at all times be your moſt valuable reſources.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

ON THE RIGHT OF SUCCESSION TO THE EFFECTS OF ALIENS DYING IN THE KINGDOM, WITHOUT BEING NATURALIZED.

WHETHER we fix our attention on public credit, or on the propereſt means to augment the circulation of ſpecie, and all the ſources of wealth, the new inhabitants that ſettle in a country, produce a real advantage, and government ought more eſpecially to encourage thoſe, who bleſſed with the gifts of fortune may increaſe the quota of the ſalaries paid to induſtry. An univerſal religious toleration would undoubtedly be the moſt efficacious

of

of all encouragements; it is an advantage which the progreſs of knowledge, and the authority of great precedents ſeem to promiſe to Europe; but that political object being connected with other circumſtances, its diſcuſſion might appear untimely in this work.

I SHALL therefore confine myſelf to a very ſmall part of the ſubject compared with ſo extenſive an idea: I have in view, the right of ſucceſſion to the eſtates of aliens dying in France, without being naturalized: it is included in the collections of the revenue, made by the managers of the royal demeſnes; and its produce is almoſt entirely conſumed by the expences of the judicial proceedings, and the emoluments of the tribunals. Diverſe treaties have aboliſhed, or modified this right, for the ſubjects of ſeveral nations; and in the beginning of 1780, I communicated to the Prime Miniſter then in favour, the plan of a general law on that ſubject, which I intended to ſubmit to the conſideration of the King.

ALL

ALL prohibitions, or exceptions that may prevent foreigners from coming to ſpend their incomes in the kingdom, and bartering their money for the produce of our induſtry, appear to be as abſurd arrangements, as a law would be, that ſhould prohibit the exportation of that produce. The above right of ſucceſſion to aliens is ſtill more prejudicial to the nations that exerciſe it, than to thoſe foreigners whoſe property is thus uſurped: and it never ought to be put in force, neither againſt our friends, nor our foes; neither in time of peace, nor of war.

THE Engliſh nation is ſtill ſubjected to that right for their real eſtates, and I have known ſeveral Engliſhmen, who diſcouraged on that account from purchaſing even a plain country-houſe, and yet mortified at the privation, have given up the wiſh they had formed of ſettling in France.

THE Britiſh government muſt certainly ſee with pleaſure our perſeverance in a regulation ſo favourable to its political views; and that government ought now to deſire more

more than ever, that all nations ſhould maintain thoſe laws and cuſtoms that are calculated to diſcourage foreigners from coming among them. It is not therefore at the requiſition of the Engliſh adminiſtration that we ought to aboliſh entirely the right of ſucceſſion to aliens, it is rather in oppoſition to its views that it ought to be done: the ſuppreſſion muſt not be conſidered in the light of an act of condeſcendence, but rather of a political arrangement; I will even maintain, that if this right was to be eſtabliſhed among other nations, for the French, it could not be a reaſon for our doing the ſame by them: for reciprocity is never rational, when it cannot exiſt without injury to one's ſelf.

THE laſt war, produced in England two important events worthy of ſerious reflection. The immenſity of the loans, and the high rate of intereſt that was neceſſarily allowed, have increaſed the number and fortune of independant individuals, that is to ſay, of that claſs of citizens, whoſe wealth is transferable, and who may the eaſier move about the world, and change the

the place of their reſidence. At the ſame time, the taxes have been ſo much increaſed, that the price of all articles, both of neceſſity, and of luxury is conſiderably augmented.

THE combination of theſe circumſtances may engage many Engliſhmen to ſpend their incomes out of their own country. Some of them, attracted by the idea of liberty and the ſameneſs of religion and language will perhaps emigrate to America; but the neighbourhood of France, its produce, the convenience and pleaſures of its metropolis, the temperature of the climate in the ſouthern provinces of the kingdom, and ſundry other advantages might engage the inhabitants of Great-Britain, and more eſpecially the Roman Catholics, to reſide more or leſs in France; and the entire ſuppreſſion of the right of ſucceſſion to aliens might help to encourage them. Every conſideration therefore ſeems to point out the neceſſity of the total ſuppreſſion of that impolitic and ſavage right; and as ſuch a reſolution applicable to all times, ſeemed to me to be ſtill more generous in the midſt of war,

I had

I had formed the plan of a law for that purpoſe which I ſhall introduce in this place: Mr. De Maurepas, then Prime Miniſter did not refuſe to give it his approbation in the King's preſence, but he judged that another time would be more proper for its diſcuſſion.

DECLARATION, FOR THE GENERAL SUPPRESSION OF THE RIGHT OF SUCCESSION TO ALIENS.

" WHILST we attended to the various ar-
" ticles of the collection of our revenues, that
" are to be intruſted to the care of the new
" adminiſtrators of our royal domains, we
" found—that the produce of the right of
" ſucceſſion to aliens had never been of any
" importance; that it has been diminiſhed by
" the ſucceſſive treaties we have made with
" diverſe ſovereigns: that, it has very often
" happened, that the officers of the revenue
" for our royal domains not being timely ac-
" quainted with the real country of foreign-
" ers dying in our kingdom, have begun to

" make reſearches, and to commence vexati-
" ous judicial proceſſes againſt the heirs of
" ſuch perſons, which were often obliged to
" be deſiſted from, in conſequence of a more
" exact information; that complaints and
" conteſtations were the conſequences of
" ſuch proceedings, much againſt our royal
" intention, and that this inconvenience
" could only be entirely prevented, by a ge-
" neral ſuppreſſion of the above right.

" We have beſides thought it would be
" worthy of our ideas of juſtice and hoſpita-
" lity, to aboliſh entirely, the traces of a
" right that is no longer applicable to the
" preſent times, that is directly contrary to
" the manners of the French, and claſhes
" with the principles of an enlightened ad-
" miniſtration. In fact, how can theſe inci-
" dental ſucceſſions which from time to time
" fall to our royal domains, be put in com-
" petition with that circulation of ſpecie,
" conſumption and induſtry which it is ſo
" important for us to encourage, and to
" attract into our dominions, from every
" other country.

Con-

" CONSIDERING therefore, that the fortu-
" nate climate of France; its various pro-
" ductions; and the prudent liberty we have
" it in contemplation to allow conſtantly, to
" all thoſe who live under our government,
" are ſo many advantages which inſure new
" wealth, and inhabitants to our kingdom;
" we could not behold without concern, the
" exerciſe of a right that muſt be prejudicial
" to the favourable influence of theſe diverſe
" circumſtances, and which, beſides its op-
" poſition to our generoſity, is in direct con-
" tradiction to our moſt eſſential intereſts:
" ALL THESE MOTIVES, &c.

ARTICLE I.

WE aboliſh and ſuppreſs through all our dominions, the right of ſucceſſion to aliens, and order, that the ſaid right ſhall not be re-eſtabliſhed in caſe of war, or hoſtilities.

ARTICLE II.

PROVIDED nevertheleſs, that no alterations be made in the ordinary order of ſuc-

ceſſions; and that the laws, uſages and cuſtoms in force in our dominions be kept and obſerved with reſpect to foreigners, in the ſame manner as for our own ſubjects, &c. &c.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

ON BANK NOTES, AND THE DISCOUNTING BANK, OR CAISSE D'ESCOMPTE.

THE quantity of actual ſpecie which repreſents the ſucceſſive advantages gained by commerce in any country whatever, becomes one of the moſt certain ſigns of its proſperity; but we cannot conſider the amount of the bank notes, or bills for money, that are introduced into circulation in the ſame light; there would even be no reaſon for doing it, although the public confidence riſen to the higheſt pitch, ſhould give to theſe notes all the value of real money: for they do not repreſent a profit made by commerce; but only a conventional and domeſtic ſpecie,

which in addition to gold and ſilver coins, multiplies the repreſentative ſigns of wealth in a ſtate; and that multiplication has its inconveniences as well as its advantages. An increaſe in the price of induſtry, and of the natural produce neceſſarily reſults from it; and theſe circumſtances may be prejudicial to the bartering trade carried on with foreign parts. But on the other hand, an abundance of ſpecie, and the introduction of a paper-money that renders circulation eaſier and more rapid, are ſo many means, which united together, efficacaciouſly contribute to the lowering of the rate of intereſt, and under that aſpect, are favourable to agriculture, commerce and manufacturies. Public credit, more eſpecially, is greatly aſſiſted thereby; and as the ſucceſs of a loan in time of war, is one of the greateſt ſupports of political power, we are not to wonder that England ſets ſo high a value on the inviolate credit of its bank-notes, nor at the deſire often manifeſted by other nations, to have a ſimilar eſtabliſhment among them. But in order to introduce in a ſtate, notes that may take the place of ſpecie, it is not ſufficient to

wiſh

wiſh for it; for ſuch inſtitutions are not the work of authority.

A SOVEREIGN may, by exerciſing his abſolute power, order that paper-money ſhall be received in payment, to which he may give more or leſs conſiſtency, either by attaching an yearly intereſt thereto, or uniting to it ſome future advantages. At firſt, he may oblige his creditors to be ſatisfied with ſuch money: theſe may, under the protection of a law relative thereto, pay their debts in the ſame manner; but in proportion as theſe notes are diſperſed in the hands of people who have no creditors, they have no other method of employing this paper-money they have received, than by uſing it in the purchaſe of the various kinds of property they want: and then it is, that they experience the prejudice reſulting to them from this law of the ſovereign; for this law cannot conſtrain any body to ſell his lands, his houſes, his time, nor his ſervices, in exchange for a kind of money in which no confidence is placed; or if that money is received in payment for any bargains, the price is raiſed in proportion

to the difference eſtabliſhed by opinion, between real ſpecie and paper-money. But in in that caſe, the ſovereign's arrangements are complained againſt, on every ſide; his intention was to alleviate the fate of his own creditors, by authorizing them to pay their debts with the paper money he forced them to accept; but the prejudice has fallen on others of his ſubjects: thus his juſtice is not maintained: and beſides, he has to reproach himſelf with having produced a general diſorder, with having every where changed the ſpirit of conventions, and with having voluntarily relaxed the principles of morality, which it is ſo much his intereſt to maintain.

It happens alſo, that adminiſtration to preſerve the profit it had in view, when it paid the creditors of the ſtate with paper-money, is often obliged to run it down after a ſhort time; for as ſoon as that money is diſperſed through the kingdom, it is brought again from all parts, to the royal exchequer in payment of the taxes, and then the ſovereign does not any longer know how to provide for the exigencies of the

ſtate;

ſtate; for neither merchants, contractors, nor any of thoſe whoſe ſervices are to be purchaſed but not conſtrained, will be ſatiſfied with a fictitious money, which they cannot uſe to procure for themſelves, the neceſſaries and conveniences of life.

Let us now ſuppoſe this new kind of money, on account of the intereſt annexed to it, to be only ten, twenty or thirty per cent. under par, then the ſovereign would not indeed be under a neceſſity to aboliſh it at any rate, but he would each ſucceeding year find himfelf poorer, becauſe receiving only paper-money in payment of the taxes, and having no other funds for his expences, theſe would neceſſarily increaſe, in proportion to the loſs the new money ſhould ſuſtain in the public opinion.

Part of the general reflections I had occaſion to make, when treating upon the debaſing of gold and ſilver ſpecies, are equally applicable to the introduction of paper money, by means of authority alone: theſe two operations are very ſimilar to each other, becauſe in both caſes, the Sovereign, to

conceal the act of injuſtice he commits againſt his creditors, wants to oblige his ſubjects to ſet a higher value on his new fabricated money, than on real ſpecie.

THE court of Spain fabricated ſucceſſively, to the amount of one hundred and twenty millions of livres in paper-money, during the laſt war, it decided, that a twentieth part of it ſhould be paid off yearly; it aſſigned an intereſt of four per cent. on that money: communities and corporate bodies who have continually large funds to diſpoſe of, were conſtrained to employ them in the purchaſe of theſe notes, which has conſiderably leſſened the quantity of ſpecie in circulation, and as there is no public debt in Spain, that paper money was the only negotiable fund of government: in ſhort, the court of Spain was enabled to make uſe of means analogous to the nature of its authority, in order to enforce in the ſtricteſt manner the admiſſion of theſe notes in payments; and in conſequence of all theſe circumſtances, their price has never experienced any great revolutions: there were nevertheleſs, ſome periods during the war,

in

in which real ſpecie was nearly twenty per cent better than paper money; and though I have no preciſe informations on that ſubject, I have not the leaſt doubt but the expences of Spain have increaſed in proportion to the difference that has exiſted in the public opinion, between paper-money and real ſpecie. Now, the court of Madrid would neither have experienced that inconvenience, nor the dangerous effects of a conſtraining law, if inſtead of procuring reſources by means of the introduction of paper-money, it had opened a loan, the ſucceſs of which it ſhould have endeavoured to aſſure, both by the ſubſcriptions of corporate bodies, and a rate of intereſt proportionate to the circumſtances of the times. I ſhall add, that in France, where there is already ſo conſiderable a quantity of public funds in circulation, and where beſides, there is ſo great a variety of different combinations to be made; if an arrangement ſimilar to that made in Spain, had been adopted, the moſt fatal conſequences would have reſulted from it,

Is it not poſſible, however that bank notes ſhould be abſolutely of the ſame value as effective ſpecie? Undoubtedly it is, and experience proves it: let us conſider by what methods that opinion is eſtabliſhed; and how it may change for the worſe, and at laſt be annihilated.

We may in the firſt place, eaſily conceive, that bank-notes would deſerve an indefinite confidence, if the numerary ſum of theſe notes was depoſited in gold or ſilver in a public treaſury; if faithful adminiſtrations were intruſted with the collective management; and laſtly, if ſuch an eſtabliſhment was ſituated in a country where the ſovereign, from the nature of the government, could never have the power to violate ſuch a depoſit, nor to confound the regular order of receipts and payments, by any means whatſoever.

These conditions are duly obſerved in Holland, and at the bank of Amſterdam; but inſtead of diſtributing notes to all perſons who depoſit their money in it, they are only regiſtered as creditors in the bank-books, and in a private book which the parties

parties themſelves keep; now, it is evident, that this regiſtering which is made both on the receipt, and on the payment of ſpecie, might be perfectly well ſupplied by a delivery of bank notes, in an exact proportion to the ſum of the depoſits: an entire confidence, would undoubtedly be placed in ſuch notes; but they could not be conſidered as an augmentation of the circulating ſpecie of the country, becauſe the gold and ſilver repreſented by them, would be continually depoſited in the bank, and remain there in a ſtate of ſtagnation.

THIS is not the caſe, with the notes of the bank of England; they may be conſidered as a real augmentation of the ſymbols of exchange, becauſe the bank never keeps in gold and ſilver, more than a ſum extremely inferior to the numerary value of its notes in circulation; theſe notes are nevertheleſs as much eſteemed as real ſpecie; and I muſt add, that this opinion is founded on rational ideas.

THE bank of England was inſtituted in 1693, in the reign of William III. eighty four years after the eſtabliſhment of that at Amſterdam

Amſterdam; and although their reſpective conſtitutions are very different, yet it is evident, that a knowledge of the firſt was conducive to the adoption of the ſeveral regulations of the latter.

Was it the private intereſt of the founders that modified the peculiar conſtitution of the bank of England? or did government diſcover before hand, its happy conſeſequences for the ſtate? This point is not worth aſcertaining: but it ſeems apparent, that in the formation of that eſtabliſhment, the advantage of the firſt ſubſcribers and that of the nation, were perfectly well connected with each other.

Let us firſt conſider what mode of reaſoning muſt have been followed by the merchants, or monied men, who were the firſt authors of the eſtabliſhment of the bank of England. The bank of Amſterdam, they undoubtedly ſaid, is only a depoſit, whoſe inactive and unprofitable funds are, as it were, buried in the ſubterranean receſſes of that bank.

Let us conceive another plan; let us eſtabliſh in London, under the authority of

of government a privileged Compnay compoſed of ſtock-holders, who ſhall depoſit a capital to ſerve as a foundation for the public ſecurity: let that Company, under the denomination of the *Bank of England*, be the depoſitary of the money with which it may be voluntarily intruſted; let it receive and pay away for private individuals; let it execute theſe tranſactions, not by a ſimple regiſtering on the bank-books, but by delivering treaſury receipts, under the name of bank-notes payable, on demand; and when theſe notes ſhall be in the greateſt repute; then, inſtead of keeping in ſpecie, in the bank-treaſury, the total ſum of gold and ſilver there depoſited, we ſhall keep only the neceſſary quantity to be enabled to pay thoſe who from time to time, ſhall deſire to convert their bank-notes into real ſpecie; the overplus of which ſhall be employed in the diſcounting of good bills of exchange, and the profit whereof ſhall be divided between the ſubſcribers, or ſtock-holders of the bank, as intereſt for the capital they may have furniſhed towards its eſtabliſhment.

THIS is not all: the company may be able after ſome time, to extend the diſcounting branch and its profits much farther; for in proportion

proportion as the bank-notes, acquiring more credit ſhall become a ſort of circulating ſpecie, the bank may diſpoſe of them as of a capital in real ſpecie; provided however, that there is always in its treaſury, a ſufficient ſum of effective money, conſtantly to pay on demand, the notes for which money may be required; and though this preparatory ſum was to be only in the proportion of one, to three, or of one to, two, it would not be the leſs true, that the greater the number of bank-notes in circulation, the greater would be the profits of the proprietors of bank ſtock.

THIS ſpeculative mode of reaſoning of the founders of the bank of England, muſt undoubtedly appear very juſt; and government, when it reflected on that plan, or when it was the firſt to encourage it, certainly foreſaw, that the intereſt of the new ſtock-holders would be connected with the advantage of the ſtate: it prejudged, that if ever theſe notes acquired ſuch credit as to be received in all payments, there would reſult from their adoption an increaſe of

ſpecie,

ſpecie, and an activity of circulation very favourable to commerce, and public credit.

Let us now examine if the confidence of the Britiſh nation in the notes of its bank, is the reſult of reflection, or the inconſiderate effect of imagination and habit. The duration of that confidence might perhaps be ſufficient to guide our opinions on this ſubject; for nothing is permanent that is not ſupported by reaſon.

I ſhall readily admit, that the credit of the notes of the bank of England would be more ſolidly eſtabliſhed, if theſe notes were only the exact repreſentatives of an equivalent ſum of effective money depoſited in the bank: however, if the notes launched into circulation have only been delivered in exchange for negotiable ſecurities, whoſe ſolidity is generally acknowledged, and if theſe ſecurities are intruſted to the care of faithful adminiſtrators, the ſame degree of confidence may be put in the bank-notes, as would be placed in the negotiable ſecurities that are repreſented by theſe bank-notes.

It is true, that the bank does not limit its operations to the diſcounting of bills of exchange; it alſo makes advances at intereſt, either to individuals ſubſcribing to the public loans, or to government itſelf, on the aſſignment of its revenue, payable the year following; but if no body in England is in the leaſt uneaſy about the regular payment of theſe aſſignments; if in the advances made to the ſubſcribers above mentioned, every precaution which prudence dictates, is taken, and if the nation bearing witneſs of all theſe tranſactions, conſents to them, it ought not to entertain the leaſt doubt reſpecting the ſecurity of the bank-notes that are delivered in exchange for theſe various kinds of pledges.

Under what circumſtances then can we rationally ſuppoſe that bank-notes might fall into diſcredit? It muſt be, when the nation ſhould ceaſe to confide in the ſecurities on which the bank makes advances.

This can never happen with reſpect to commercial bills of exchange, daily diſcounted by the bank, becauſe collectively

lectively, they are a perfectly ſolid ſecurity, and the accidental loſſes are more than compenſated by the common profits of the bank. Public diffidence therefore, can only fall on the ſecurity of the advances made by the bank to government, or to perſons cloſely connected with the fate of public affairs; and there is not the leaſt doubt, but if the nation was to adopt on that ſubject, ſentiments and opinions, which the bank ſhould refuſe likewiſe to adopt, the credit of its notes, would diminiſh: but, on the other hand, as long as no ſuch difference of opinion exiſts, their credit muſt remain in full force.

We might alſo eſtimate, the ſolidity of the confidence placed in the notes of the bank of England in another manner, and that would be, by an abſtruſe conſideration of the method by which the reimburſement of theſe notes might be tranſacted. The amount of the bank-notes in circulation is only known to a very ſmall number of perſons, and I am too diffident of the reſult of my reſearches on that ſubject, to dare to point it out: but whatever may be

the quantity of theſe notes, as they have never been iſſued, but in exchange for a depoſit of money, or for a debt of government, or for an aſſignment on the public revenue; or laſtly, for bills of exchange, it is evident, that if government was to open a loan to pay off the advances made to it, and if the bank, ceaſing to diſcount any bills of exchange ſhould only demand the payment of thoſe in its hands, all the bank-notes in circulation would ſucceſſively be annihilated. Undoubtedly ſuch a tranſaction would be clearly repugnant both to private intereſt, and to the good of the ſtate; but I make this ſuppoſition in an hypothetical manner only, and to demonſtrate more ſenſibly, the foundation of the credit of the notes of the bank of England*.

Theſe

* Government owes to the bank, on account of ſundry ſucceſſive loans, about eleven millions, ſix hundred thouſand pounds ſterling, at the rate of three per cent intereſt, and I believe it is only obliged to reimburſe the ſum of three millions, ſeven hundred thouſand pounds ſterling: in that caſe, there would be a loſs ſuſtained on the overplus of the government debt, if it was eſtimated at the actual price of the public funds; but that loſs which would only take place at the improbable period of the revocation of the charter

THESE obſervations indicate alſo, that in France, we have not a juſt idea of what we mean to ſay, when we advance, that all the wealth of England conſiſts in paper money. It is true, that with that money, the greateſt part of the payments is made in England; but that paper money is only the repreſentative of demandable ſecurities, which the bank is become poſſeſſed of, in exchange for its notes; and we ought to obſerve likewiſe, that theſe bank-notes having acquired, through the confidence of the public, the value of ſpecie, do not hinder the increaſe of gold and ſilver in Great Britain: it is in conſequence of a favourable balance of commerce that theſe metals are imported in a leſs or greater quantity into a country, and the circulation of bank-notes, inſtead of being prejudicial to the commerce of Great Britain, facilitates its operations.

HOWEVER, it is not ſufficient to maintain the credit of bank-notes, that the na-

ter of the bank, would be ſupported by the ſtockholders only: thus this circumſtance does not alter the validity of the above arguments in ſupport of the ſolidity of bank-notes.

tion places a perfect confidence in the nature of the debts that are both the representatives of, and the ſecurity for theſe notes; it is alſo requiſite, as I have already obſerved, that there ſhould be in the coffers of the bank, a ſum of gold and ſilver ſufficient to pay punctally, all the notes for which ſpecie is required. It is the buſineſs of the directors to determine, according to their prudence and experience, the proportion that ought to exiſt between the depoſit of real money, and the amount of the notes in circulation: and it is not to be doubted, but times and circumſtances are attended to, reſpecting that ſubject. The difficult times are thoſe of war; the extraordinary advances then required from the bank by government, and thoſe made to ſubſcribers to the public loans, throw a new ſum of bank-notes into circulation; and as, at the ſame time, gold and ſilver becomes more ſcarce in Europe, on account of the interruption given to the return of the regiſter-ſhips which yearly import the treaſures of America, it is not an eaſy matter for the bank of England to have conſtantly in its treaſury, a quantity of ſpecie, proportionate to the increaſe

increaſe of its notes: we may even remark, that if the precious metals riſe in price, to ſuch a degree as to procure a profit in the melting of the national ſpecie, then the effective payment of a greater number of bank-notes is required; and if the bank at ſuch times, was deſirous to balance that extraction, by purchaſing gold and ſilver, the operation would only ſerve to keep up the high price of theſe metals; the guineas iſſued out, would be immediately melted; they would be ſold again under the form of wedges, and a ſeries of ſuch tranſactions would expoſe the bank to very great loſſes.

THE bank ought then to take its precautions before hand; it would be too late, if it waited until the moment in which an abundance of its notes brought for payment ſhould alarm it; for then it could only purchaſe gold and ſilver, by giving other notes in exchange: thus it would augment their quan ity by the ſame means as it would be obliged to adopt, to increaſe its depoſit of ſpecie.

Under ſuch circumſtances, and in all others wherein the bank perceives too great a diſproportion between the amount of its circulating notes, and the quantity of gold and ſilver it has in its treaſury, it occaſionally requires from its ſtock-holders, an increaſe of capital bearing intereſt, in order to leſſen in the ſame proportion, the amount of its notes in public circulation: in ſhort, if ever the bank was really in a diſtreſſed ſituation, government would undoubtedly aſſiſt it, by leſſening the loans made to it by that eſtabliſhment; for the national credit is at preſent ſo intimately connected with that of the bank, that the firſt attention of a Britiſh miniſter of the finance muſt be, never to require from the bank any ſupplies that might expoſe it to the leaſt danger.

After this account of the baſis of the confidence placed in the notes of the Bank of England; after this indication of the precautions neceſſary to maintain that confidence, it becomes an eaſy taſk to form a right judgment on the tranſactions that diſtracted the kingdom of France, during the

the adminiſtration of Mr. Law. It is very improperly tranſmitted to poſterity, under the pompous denomination of *ſyſtem*; this is too important a title for a fooliſh project.

Mr. Law, witneſs of the firſt ſucceſſes of the Bank of England, eſtabliſhed one in France on the ſame model, the firſt capital of which was very trifling; nevertheleſs, if he had allowed it to increaſe and gain ſtrength by imperceptible degrees, it would have been more or leſs ſerviceable to the circulation of ſpecie; but at a time in which the ſtate did not enjoy the leaſt public confidence, that bank ought to have been afraid to iſſue its notes without limitation, in exchange for government debts, ſince from that moment, theſe notes could only enjoy the ſame degree of public confidence, as the ſtate itſelf.

But whether it was, that Mr. Law had not attended to the rational motives of the credit of bank-notes in England, and had only conſidered ſupplying the place of real ſpecie, by fictitious money, as a flight of imagination; or rather, that being led by the deſire of ſacrificing every thing to obtain tranſient favour, he voluntarily reject-

ed the dictates of prudence: or laſtly, that after a firſt imprudent ſtep, he found himſelf forced as it were to puſh to an extremity, what he had already carried too far; he devoted the bank almoſt from its origin, to the ſervice of government, and blended it in ſuch a manner with the public concerns, that it only appeared to be its inconſiderate agent; thus it neceſſarily participated in that miſtruſt which the diſordered ſtate of the finances had excited. He endeavoured, however, to engage the public to diſtinguiſh between the degree of credit merited by his bank, and that which belonged to government; it was under this point of view, that various excluſive commercial and revenue privileges were ſucceſſively granted to the general bank: in order that the public forming a chimerical idea of the profits to reſult from thoſe privileges, might look on them as a ſecurity for the engagements entered into by the bank; and alſo, that ſuch a multiplicity of undertakings, accumulated in the hands of the ſame eſtabliſhment, might be at leaſt for ſome time, an apparent pretence for the ſucceſſive increaſe of the bank-notes; but how

how could a project founded on deceit be the basis of a permanent confidence? the public opinion was soon undeceived; it was vainly attempted to give it a favourable turn, by the offer of fresh chimeras, or to force it by arbitrary, and rigorous laws: the disorder increased more and more; and in 1720, the notes of that bank, which were long before fallen into discredit, were publicly cried down; and the author of so many evils, being become the object of the public execration, was forced to fly with precipitation.

After so long a period, and when these convulsions are scarcely remembered, it has sometimes been attempted to re-establish the reputation of Mr. Law, by saying, that he had conceived a great idea, and formed a vast design: this is, because we are tempted to admire what we do not comprehend; it is because we love to attribute to the most profound conception, those political arrangements, the chain of which we can scarcely perceive; it is because most people dissatisfied with their condition, have a secret inclination for revolutions, and speak

of them with indulgence, when being placed at a certain diſtance from thoſe events, their minds alone are intereſted in them.

Mr. Law could not have the merit of inventing an eſtabliſhment whoſe model then exiſted in London: but he would have had a right to the public gratitude, if ſkilfully diſcerning what was required by the difference between the Britiſh and the French forms of goverment, he had guided his operations in conſequence of that knowledge; and if, forewarned by the ſituation of public credit, that he could not connect it intimately with that of the bank, without riſking the deſtruction of the latter in a ſhort time, he had been moderate in all the articles in which he was extreme: but he ſacrificed the progreſſive advantages that might have accrued to the ſtate from a ſolidly conſtituted eſtabliſhment, to the tranſient ſplendor of a great illuſion; he declined the ſupport of reaſon, to truſt in the flights of folly; he was deceived in the national character, and miſtook a quick conception for a determined ſentiment; he deceived the ſovereign with vain hopes,

and

and the ſubjects with falſe promiſes; he did not confide in any virtue, nor was he aſhamed of any diſorder. If theſe may be called great ideas of adminiſtration, they are eaſily attained, by ſhaking off the yoke of reflection and prudence, and the principles of morality.

THE *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*, or diſcounting bank lately eſtabliſhed at Paris is an imitation, both of the outſet of the Bank of England, and of Mr. Law's bank: the capital ſubſcribed by the proprietors amounts at preſent, to ſeventeen millions, five hundred thouſand livres.

A DIFFICULTY was to be got over, to give conſiſtency to this eſtabliſhment; it was the recollection of the diſorders and calamities produced by the bank of Mr. Law. I think I adopted on this occaſion, the only method that could triumph over that diſpoſition of men's minds: it was to intereſt the principal bankers of Paris in the ſucceſs of a diſcounting bank; ſince their receipts and payments are ſo multiplied, that by determining them to receive its

its notes in their daily tranſactions and connections with each other, it was certain their circulation would be eſtabliſhed, and extended in a ſhort time: the event proved the truth of theſe conjectures; and ſuch had been the progreſs of public confidence, that in October 1783, when the punctuality of the payments of the diſcounting bank was interrupted, no leſs than forty-three millions of livres in its notes were in public circulation. Let us draw a veil over that event, which might have been prevented by the leaſt circumſpection, or the leaſt foreſight on the part of the Royal Exchequer: but government wanted to make an inconſiderate uſe of the reſources that were to be found in the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*; and the directors of that eſtabliſhment had neither the prudence, nor the firmneſs neceſſary to execute the duties of their ſtation with propriety: they have ſince with great diſcernment been made more dependant on the proprietors; but the ſame reſtrictions, founded in diffidence, which it became proper to lay them under, and that without any inconvenience, when the circulation of their notes did not any longer want

want their ſupport, would have been highly imprudent at the time, when the reſources and good-will of the directors were alone capable of giving credit to theſe notes. After all, the criſis of laſt year, has only had the happy effect of demonſtrating in a greater degree, the real ſolidity of the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*. The reflections I might offer on this ſubject would be exactly ſimilar to thoſe which I made reſpecting the Bank of England: for the ſame obſervations are neceſſarily applicable to ſimilar objects. I ſhall therefore remind the reader, that the notes of the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte* now in circulation, are ſecured both by the bills of exchange that are diſcounted, and by the entire capital ſubſcribed by the ſtockholders. Theſe bills of exchange, collectively conſidered, are a perfectly ſecure repreſentative of the notes; and in all likelihood, the reſult of ſuch errors as may be committed in the choice of ſome of them, will only be, to leſſen the profits of the ſtockholders; but the yearly increaſe of theſe profits ſufficiently proves, that the riſk of accidental loſſes is very inconſiderable,

able, under the care of an attentive board of directors.

It will be aſked, whether the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*, exactly ſimilar to the Bank of England, ought to deviate from its model, in one ſingle point, and make no advance on government ſecurities? I believe the Bank of England is conducted with the moſt perfect prudence; but in order to imitate it with advantage, its principles muſt be followed; and theſe principles conſiſt in never iſſuing out bank-notes but in exchange for ſecurities whoſe validity is conſecrated by the general opinion. Thus the Bank of England makes conſiderable advances on the engagements of the ſtate; without hurting its credit, becauſe the nation puts an entire confidence in theſe engagements. Let the ſame confidence be eſtabliſhed in France, let it be eſtabliſhed on permanent principles! then, the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte* may without inconvenience, imitate the Bank of England, but if the public opinion ſhould be different, the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte* would endanger the credit of its notes, by following exactly, not the principles of the Bank

Bank of England, but the application it would make of them.

HOWEVER, as extreme meaſures are ſcarcely ever the moſt rational, we may lament, for the ſake of the general good of the ſtate. that the faults committed by the adminiſtrators of the Royal Exchequer, and the directors of the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte*, have occaſioned the eſtabliſhment of regulations which reſtrain that bank in too rigid a manner from having any concerns with government. In future, both men and circumſtances may render it difficult to maintain this line of ſeparation: for what is moſt to be feared in a monarchical ſtate, is, the exertion of authority againſt every thing that limits its courſe; for it does not always obſerve in its operations, that diſcretion and moderation which ought to be its guides.

BUT government has too recently received a leſſon from experience; to allow us to miſtruſt its prudence ſo ſoon after it: and if that experience ſerves to direct its conduct in future; inſtead of attempting to make

make the *Caiſſe d'Eſcompte* paſs the limits of a proper circumſpection, it will rather be the firſt, to retain it in the right path, if it wanted to deviate from it: for there is no kind of proportion between the temporary aſſiſtance which adminiſtration might receive from an extraordinary advance, and the inconveniences that would reſult from the diminution of the credit of ſo uſeful an eſtabliſhment.

The beſt inſtitutions ſtand in need of being reſtrained within certain limits, and perhaps in public affairs, exaggeration ought to be conſidered as a real alteration of things from their primary ſtate. Thoſe eſtabliſhments more eſpecially, in which the leaſt abuſe eaſily recalls to mind others ſtill greater, and the memory of which is not obliterated, require a ſtill greater degree of circumſpection. The recollection of theſe abuſes ought not however to diſcourage us from the formation of rational eſtabliſhments; as light-houſes are conſtructed for a warning, ſo prudent arrangements ought to be adopted to prevent dangerous deviations: but it would be wrong

wrong to forego real advantages from a dread of all the evils that crowd upon imagination; for, we ſhould then be ſtopped at every inſtant: ſo wide is the field, opened on all ſides to the errors of adminiſtration! Beſides, ſome allowances ought to be made for the progreſs of knowledge: the ignorance of one century is not tranſmitted to the next; and it very often happens, that that which has been once done, is the very thing which it is impoſſible to attempt a ſecond time. It is become difficult to deceive mankind for any length of time, in the public arrangments that concern their private intereſts; and if the heart is guilty of a great crime when it wiſhes to deceive, it is alſo a great error of the mind to aim at it.

CHAP. XXVII.

ON REGULARITY IN THE ROYAL EXCHEQUER.

NOTHING can be known with any degree of certainty, nor can any thing be prudently determined without the help of regularity; man is too limited in his faculties to embrace a multiplicity of objects, unleſs he ſimplifies their combinations by an orderly method. Thus it is that we may unite under one and the ſame idea, all the informations that properly belong to it; thus it is that facilitating all the operations of the underſtanding, the powers of the mind are, as it were, extended: and theſe general truths are never more ſenſibly felt

felt than in the adminiſtration of the finances of a great ſtate; the regularity introduced into them yields that tranquillity of mind which is ſo favourable to reflection: the ſame regularity enables a miniſter to prepare beforehand, all the arrangements that circumſtances may require; and as he is never liable to ſudden exigencies, he is never obliged to make improper ſacrifices, in order to find reſources,

It will ſcarcely be believed, that when I was intruſted with the adminiſtration of the finances, it was only after ſeveral months of long and conſtant ſtudy, that I was enabled to know with certainty, the proportion that exiſted between the revenue and the expences of the ſtate: ſo diſperſed and confuſed were the informations that led to that knowledge! but when I had collected the neceſſary elements to compoſe a complete ſtatement, then it became an eaſy matter for me to render theſe various informations diſtinct, by means of regiſters compoſed with method, and kept with exactneſs. However, in order to guard againſt all poſſible errors, and to know, al-

moſt by heart, the actual ſituation of the Royal Exchequer, and the collective maſs of affairs connected with it, I not only renewed every year, the general ſtatement of the revenue and of the expences, diſtinguiſhing with care the permanent objects from the extraordinary exigencies, but I had likewiſe under my eyes, at the end of each quarter, an exact enumeration for the remainder of the year; at the end of each month, the ſtatement for the remainder of the quarter; and at the end of each week, that for the remainder of the month; inſomuch, that by comparing theſe various ſtatements, when their reſults appeared to be diſcordant, I ſoon perceived the cauſe of the difference. It is by ſuch a regular and conſtant order, and by means of operations which oblige us to return often to the ſame objects, that the certain knowledge of the receipts and expences of the greateſt kingdom of Europe may become as familiar as that of the income of a ſmall republic. It cannot be imagined in what a degree, that exact knowledge leads to economy: an augmentation of expences to the amount of ſeveral millions, is almoſt nothing

thing in the eyes of him, who compares that expence with the confuſed idea he entertains of the reſources of a great kingdom; but the moſt trifling ſum becomes intereſting, when it is compared with the preciſe balance of the receipts againſt the expences; and I muſt add, that the more this balance is diminiſhed by numerous diviſions of the year, the more a ſlight ſaving appears important to the miniſter; for it is always from their being compared with others, that ideas make a more or leſs profound impreſſion on the mind.

I WAS told by a perſon of credit, that having one day aſked the Empreſs of Ruſſia, by what method ſhe could perſonally conduct her finances ſo well; ſhe anſwered, *By continually reckoning*. A very juſt expreſſion, and of great weight; but it requires an elevated mind to know how to ſimplify a vaſt and complicated adminiſtration; and this elevation is ſtill more requiſite, when that adminiſtration is our own.

LASTLY, it is with the aſſiſtance of regularity that the various informations which

are neceſſary to maintain a continual courſe of reflection, grow intimately connected with it, and are a ſafeguard againſt the flights of imagination: whilſt on the contrary, if the faculty of thinking, and the neceſſity of action are ſeparated from a poſitive knowledge of the ſituation of the finances, of the embarraſſment of public affairs, and of the difficulties of the preſent moment; then a miniſter gives himſelf up to dangerous abſtractions; he wants to replace with general ideas, the preciſe informations which the want of order has rendered inſupportable to him. He then appears to me like an architect, who in the midſt of a heap of ſtones of different forms, cannot take upon himſelf to be at the trouble of claſſing and ſeparating them; he therefore is ſatisfied with trying, whether any kind of building can be conſtructed with materials of all dimenſions; and he raiſes a monſtrous pile, without any proportion, or regularity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

IDEAS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GENERAL BOARD FOR RESEARCHES AND INFORMATIONS.

THE great number and diverſity of informations that may guide the general adminiſtration of the finances, and the great length of time that was neceſſary to obtain only a few, gave me the idea of the formation of an uſeful eſtabliſhment, which I deſigned to propoſe to his Majeſty: it was the inſtitution of a ſeparate board, ſolely deſtined to collect a multiplicity of intereſting informations, and to claſs them in a clear and eaſy method.

No ſuch collection exiſts at preſent; each new miniſter, according to his abilities, or to the degree of concern he takes

in public affairs, requires ſome information here and there; and whilſt he conſiders theſe explications as only gratifying his own curioſity, he carries them away with him on his reſignation, and very often burns them as uſeleſs papers. The treaſure, indeed, is generally ſo trifling, that it does not occaſion much regret.

THE board I wanted to eſtabliſh might have remedied theſe inconveniences; in the firſt place, it would have been requiſite to depoſit the information I had collected, and all the alterations introduced by length of time would likewiſe have been regiſtered. In this manner it would have continued to make the proper reſearches, to aſcertain at all times, the extent of the contributions of the people; the reſpective quota of each tax; the quantity collected in each province; the charges of collection, the number of fiſcal officers; the conſumption of ſalt and tobacco, the amount of ſeizures and condemnations for the contraband trade; the number of hoſpitals, the quantity of ſick and infirm, that are yearly received in them; the increaſe or diminution

ution of beggars and foundlings; the extent of highways, and vicinal communications, and their annual increaſe; the common proportion of individuals liable to exigible perſonal ſervices in each province; the general ſtatement of the public debt; the liſt of the yearly tranſactions of the *Caiſe d'Eſcompte*; and of the Mount of Piety; the progreſs of the cultivation of waſte lands; of population, and of the increaſe of ſpecie; the amount of the exports and imports particulariſed for each ſort of merchandize; and in ſhort, all the information diſplayed in a great meaſure in this work.

But it were alſo to be wiſhed, that in this ſame depoſit ſundry other informations might be found; ſome of which, though to appearance they are objects of curioſity, are nevertheleſs more or leſs connected with the reflections required by the adminiſtration of the finances and government in general; ſuch are, for example, inſtructive reſearches into the extent of the principal articles of conſumption, into the common proportion between the ſeed and the

the produce of the lands in various parts of the kingdom; the quantity of acres under cultivation, the variations in the price of labour; the proportion of the number of the nobility and privileged people to that of the commonalty; the number of eccleſiaſtics; the number of proteſtants, the progreſs of luxury in the capital; the ſhortneſs of life in ſome dangerous trades; the intereſt of foreigners, and of each nation in particular, in our public funds; the ſituation of beggars and wretched perſons ſupported in the various charitable inſtitutions, the trade they have been bred to; and ſundry other objects equally intereſting.

It will perhaps be thought at firſt ſight, that this taſk would fall very heavy upon one ſingle board; but it ought to be obſerved, that in every department of adminiſtration, there are always ſome individuals capable of making ſuch inquiries as are connected with their ordinary occupations; and therefore, all that could be required, would be to direct them to demand freſh informations from theſe departments

ments, to put them in order, and to take notice of the variations that ſhould be occaſioned by the length of time. Then thoſe errors that might have eſcaped notice in the firſt arrangement, would be diſcovered, by means of theſe ſucceſſive informations; inſomuch, that after ſome years, this duty might be eaſily fulfilled, by men of common abilities. Each of the informations that ſhould be collected ought to be ſummarily inſcribed in a peculiar regiſter, with references for the particulars, to ſeparate books; and by adopting this method, the general extract of this work might be contracted yearly within a very narrow compaſs. This collection would be of very great uſe to active miniſters, and the title page alone of the informations included in ſuch a work, would be ſufficient to intereſt the moſt ſlothful minds.

It would be neceſſary, that the chief of this board ſhould have been early initiated in the affairs of adminiſtration, and have been familiar with ſuch ſubjects. It would be proper to appoint a magiſtrate that might be inveſted with ſufficient au-

thor-

thority to collect the diverſe neceſſary informations, without being obliged to require at every inſtant, the intervention of the miniſter. When adminiſtration has occaſionally manifeſted a ſudden deſign of entering into any one of the above reſearches, without explaining its reaſons for ſo doing, that was ſufficient to give the alarm; but a much more extenſive and diverſified curioſity, would not inſpire the leaſt diffidence, if it was attributed to a general deſire of inſtruction.

SHALL it be objected againſt this plan, that ſo many materials are uſeleſs, that our anceſtors have done without them, and that we may do the ſame; that a ſenſible man does not want all theſe elements, that an ignorant man cannot adopt them, and that the fool would only make a wrong uſe of them? I ſhall readily own, that even with the neceſſary help to obtain ſpeedily all the informations that are intereſting to adminiſtration, it is ſtill poſſible to be an unſkilful miniſter; but would that miniſter be leſs ſo, if he was totally uninformed? As to ſenſible perſons,

I am

I am convinced that inſtruction is to them of the higheſt importance: that inſtruction becomes the ſalutary curb of imagination; its flights are circumſcribed to real objects by poſitive knowledge, and it is, in ſome ſort obliged to direct its ſpeculations towards what may be profitable to mankind. It is to be wiſhed, that all governments were to eſtabliſh a depoſit of informations, ſimilar to that I have indicated, it is to be wiſhed they were brought to communicate voluntarily to each other, all the general obſervations they might not want to keep excluſively to themſelves, becauſe ſeveral of theſe obſervations would contribute to perfect the ideas of the public good. It ſeems to me, that this noble and pathetic communication would be calculated to unite them, and to inſpire all nations with generoſity of ſentiments. But although each of theſe governments was to keep its informations to itſelf, ſovereigns might ſtill diſcover, to the great advantage of humanity, how much they have to do, before they can complete all the uſeful and be-

beneficent occupations, which peaceful quiet times afford them an opportunity to meditate upon, and to carry into execution.

CHAP

CHAP. XXIX.

ON THE ECONOMY OF TIME.

LET my reader endeavour for a moment to assemble in his mind, the immense details of the chief of the administration of the finances of France; and casting only a glance on the general notions I have indicated, let him represent to himself the multiplicity of branches of revenue, and of expence; the diversity of taxes, the variety of customs and privileges, the uncertainty of the principles, the habit of the various degrees of consideration due to each person; the different pretensions of courtiers, nobles and magistrates; the diverse interests of financiers and

and merchants; in ſhort, the neceſſities of an immenſe nation, ſurrounded on all ſides with taxes, and the continual relation of the royal exchequer with all the branches of government.

AFTERWARDS, and when he has reflected for a few moments on this confuſion which is ſtill augmented by numberleſs unforeſeen circumſtances, let him fix his attention on the common degree of abilities given to one man, and compare them with ſo vaſt a charge, and ſo complicated an adminiſtration! Then certainly he will be the moſt ſurpriſed at the inſufficiency of the inſtrument adapted to ſo immenſe a labour.

BUT ſince the nature of things is ſuch, and ſince the putting ſuch a department into commiſſion would be the ſource of other inconveniencies, by occaſioning contradictions, conflicts of authority, delays, and other obſtacles which originate from a diverſity of pretenſions, and the ſtruggles of ſelf-love; it is neceſſary, whilſt one chief is appointed to a department, that being

being continually ſtruck with the diſproportion that exiſts between his abilities, and the duties he is to fulfill, he ſhould at leaſt extend his faculties by all the means in his power; and the moſt important is a proper economy of his time.

A LIFE of diſſipation, or pleaſure is forbidden to the ſtateſman: he muſt labour inceſſantly, and accumulate thought upon thought: his leiſure hours ought to be limited to the time neceſſary to recruit his ſtrength: but to be an economiſt of his time, it is not alone ſufficient that he ſhould devote himſelf entirely to the duties of his place: for, if he ſhould attend to them without any method, and without a ſkilful choice of his occupations, he will no longer be maſter of that general chain of connections which an adminiſtrator of the finances ought to feel continually in his hands, if he would not transform himſelf into a blind agent, who can only apply his ſtrength to the objects that are within reach.

THE firſt advice that ought to be given to all adminiſtrators of the finances, whoſe occupations will always be greater than their means, is never to tranſact perſonally, that which others may execute as well as themſelves, or even only in a ſufficient manner: for ideas of perfection become a tyrannical thought, when they degenerate into a minute anxiety; and ſuch a ſpirit never can influence the chief of an extenſive adminiſtration, without prejudice to a more general and eſſential attention. Not that it is juſtifiable to be indifferent to particulars; but it is much leſs by his own labours, than by an intelligent choice of thoſe who are to ſecond him, that a miniſter can execute this branch of his department.

HE will not be long in perceiving, how very ſcarce thoſe men are, who are qualified to be good under-ſecretaries; and it would be an error to think that their quantity will make up for the want of abilities; the too great multiplicity of the branches of his department occaſions a real loſs of time to the miniſter; for each ſub-

altern

altern wiſhing to ſet a great value on his work, in order to arrogate a greater ſhare of it to himſelf, will lengthen out the affairs intruſted to his care, and even may ſometimes ſtart difficulties, in order to conquer them. Theſe obſervations are ſtill more ſenſibly felt, when thoſe perſons, who are appointed by the miniſter to be the principals in the various branches of any department, are of a ſuperior rank to that of the under-ſecretaries: then every claim of pride, for a few minutes, abſorbs the time allotted to the report of the labour of the day: then they open their budget and ſlowly ſearch for their papers with an air of dignity; they deſtine a few moments more to compliments, and ſocial diſcourſe, to ſhow that they are not ignorant of good breeding, or to put themſelves on a footing of equality: at laſt, the report begins, and the miniſter conſtrained by the degree of reſpect they ſeem to require, is at a great loſs how to avoid hearing uſeleſs explanations, and deſultory diſcuſſions ſtarted to conceal their ignorance of the ſubject in queſtion; and the art made uſe of to diſplay, not the abilities requiſite for

the ſubject, but the wit they are glad to play off occaſionally.

THE too great multiplicity of perſons at the head of the various branches of a department, renders it likewiſe more difficult to convey the inſtruction which is requiſite to bring the ſubalterns into the miniſter's method of judging, feeling, and tranſacting buſineſs; and this ſame arrangement often ſeparates, and diſunites thoſe affairs that have a cloſe relation to each other: certainly, even the man who is moſt worthy of confidence, ought not to be intruſted with a department above his ſtrength; but uſeleſs diviſions and thoſe which take place only to oblige a greater number of perſons, are contrary to the principles of a prudent adminiſtration.

IT is, as it were, from the firſt hour of his miniſtry, that an adminiſtrator of the finances becomes conſcious of the diſproportion between his abilities and the taſk he has to execute; for he is not long before he perceives that he cannot read all the

the memorials preſented to him, nor all the letters he receives, nor ſometimes all thoſe he ſigns; he ought therefore to ſupply with intelligence, the deficiencies unavoidable both from the ſhortneſs of time, and the limits of his abilities. He muſt adopt a method, by the help of which he may eaſily diſtinguiſh between what requires a particular attention on his part, and what only demands his knowledge of the principal object; between what he ought to know perſonally, and what he may truſt to the examination of perſons, whoſe character and judgement he has experienced.

A REGULAR diſtribution of all his time is likewiſe infinitely neceſſary. It ſeems as if the value of time was unknown to him, and as if he was undecided in the midſt of the ſolicitudes which public affairs require, when he has not determined hours for each branch of buſineſs, or when he ſuffers himſelf to be continually interrupted by the intruſion of a ſubject foreign to that he wiſhes to attend to. I am afraid to appear too minute; other-

wiſe I ſhould recommend the being very regular even in the diſpoſal of papers. I have known men in a public department, who never could find thoſe they wanted, without a long previous reſearch: manuſcripts accumulated on all ſides in the cloſet, of a miniſter may look well in the eyes of fools; it is with them a token of great occupation; but an experienced obſerver forms a different kind of judgment.

Too frequent public levees are a real loſs of time, ſince the miniſter can attend but very ſuperficially to each matter at ſuch audiences; but it is nevertheleſs neceſſary, that there ſhould be ſome days ſet apart for that purpoſe; though it were only, to admit thoſe, who are of an obſcure claſs, and deſtitute of protection, to approach the miniſter; and alſo, that the knowledge of an important matter, ſhould not be obliged to depend on a letter, or a memorial; for it is poſſible to ſuppoſe, that a breach of confidence may put a ſtop to this channel of information.

Exclusively of theſe public levees, a miniſter cannot help giving private meetings

ings to certain deſcriptions of perſons: but he muſt not encourage the diſpoſition natural to thoſe who ſollicit, to dwell a long time on what concerns them; and I am of opinion that he ought at leaſt to adopt a ſerious look to check thoſe flights of vanity, and ſelfiſh details, which waſte ſo much time at ſuch interviews: he muſt alſo oppoſe the ſame calmneſs to the common attacks of praiſe, or flattery, which are more or leſs ſkilfully directed againſt him by the greateſt part of thoſe who ſtand in need of him, and who being ready to give him a double doſe, if he ſhews the leaſt token of ſatisfaction and of complaiſance, are more eſpecially determined after having dwelt on his merit, to require ſo much the more time to ſpeak of their own.

I THINK I had adopted an uſeful method with reſpect to theſe private audiences: it was to beg of moſt of thoſe who demanded one, to inform me previouſly in writing, what was the ſubject upon which they deſired to converſe with me; for thus, a great number of uſeleſs converſations

ſations were avoided, either by a deciſive verbal anſwer, or by an explanation given in writing.

I DO not reckon among the rational methods of ſparing time, the former cuſtom of the adminiſtration of the finances, of giving no anſwer to the letters of complaint from commercial people reſpecting the collection of the revenue duties, and of only writing the deciſion of the miniſter in the margin, leaving to the merchants, or their repreſentatives the care of coming to ſeek for that deciſion in the office, where it was depoſited: for economy of time is only precious ſo far as it allows greater leiſure for uſeful, or obligatory objects.

I FIND myſelf urged, as it were, to point out the ſureſt and beſt method of ſaving time: it is to oppoſe general principles to unjuſt ſolicitations, and indiſcreet demands, and never to deviate from them. It is exceptions that are made, which oblige the miniſter to argue againſt thoſe, who make a pretence from theſe exceptions,

tions, to obtain the ſame; they then think they have a right to ſpeak of what is due to them, conſidering what has been done for others; and the miniſter, in order to conceal his partiality, is obliged to hearken patiently to details totally unconnected with public affairs: relations, friends and court-protectors demand a ſtill greater complaiſance; and the day is ſpent in playing the part of a favoured individual, inſtead of fulfilling the duties of a miniſter. How much time have I not ſpared only by announcing, that the King was determined not to grant any penſion before the end of the year; not to diſpoſe of any employment, or contract, in the finance department, through favour; never to make a conceſſion of any of his demeſnes; to make no exchanges; not to promiſe any reverſions; and to leave the choice of their ſubalterns to the Farmers-General, and the adminiſtrators of his revenue? How much time have I not ſpared by a conſtant adherence to theſe regulations, and ſundry others of a ſimilar kind?

But what ought really to be lamented, is, that ſuch is the multiplicity of public affairs, and ſo rapid is their ſucceſſion to each other, that a miniſter can never find ſufficient leiſure to inſtruct himſelf or to meditate; and yet the whole day would not be too long to aſcertain all the abuſive practices, and to prepare plans of reformation. If it was poſſible to realize an imaginary arrangement, one could wiſh to join two men in one, whereof the firſt, ſhould give himſelf up continually to reflection, whilſt the other, ſhould have an eye to the courſe of public affairs. No, it will be ſaid by ſome perſons, the French nation ought to have volatile miniſters, without anxiety, without embarraſſments, looking at every thing, rapidly, and deciding in the ſame manner: methinks, at leaſt, I hear this language held by thoſe goodnatured people who laughing, playing and ſpending their penſions, think that every thing is for the beſt in this world, and that the nation is as ſatisfied as they are. I am of opinion a miniſter will not hearken to ſuch leſſons; and I rather think, the confidence of a ſovereign, and the affairs of a great nation require from

thoſe

thoſe, who occupy the firſt places in the ſtate, an intire application of their abilities and thoughts; and that they are ſtrictly accountable for the uſe they make of their whole time.

Be therefore ſparing of time, you who know the importance of it: oh! how precious it is for a miniſter of the finances, if he contemplates the extent of his duties, and the narrow limits of his abilities! how precious it is for that man, who has it in his power to do good almoſt every inſtant! he ought to look on time as a ſort of hallowed commodity; and if he poſſeſſes a great ſhare of ſenſibility, that idea will follow him every where, either to adminiſter pleaſure to him, or to torment him with remorſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

ON THE SPIRIT OF SYSTEM.

THE ſpirit of ſyſtem is undoubtedly a good method of diſburdening the mind and abridging our ocupations; by referring almoſt every thing to ſome general idea, it diſpenſes with ſtudying, comparing and diſtinguiſhing the various gradations, and exceptions; I have however, carefully avoided adviſing this method of ſaving time. It has the ſame effect as the pruning of a tree, ſo as to make it grow in height only, inſtead of rendering it proper to give a beneficial ſhade, by lopping it with diſcretion.

THE

THE ſpirit of ſyſtem is ſometimes taken for genius, becauſe they both recall the ideas of extenſion and novelty; but their conduct is very different. Genius by ſurpaſſing the knowledge of its age, really increaſes the maſs of uſeful information; whilſt the ſpirit of ſyſtem, by exaggerating its application, deſtroys inſtead of increaſing.

GENIUS is a faculty of the mind, which enables us to collect together a great diverſity of objects, and to comprehend the chain that unites them: the ſpirit of ſyſtem makes a ſmall number of objects general, and forcibly unites every part, by the authority of one or two principles. Genius does not run counter to common opinions, becauſe it conſiders them as the reſult of a long ſeries of obſervations; and it pays reſpect to good ſenſe, as being the faithful guardian of thoſe opinions: the ſpirit of ſyſtem on the contrary, finds errors in every thing; becauſe its attention always directed to the ſame line, never ſees more than one dimenſion; and it deſpiſes that good ſenſe which adheres to vulgar maxims, often with-

without being able to defend them. Good ſenſe is confined within the limits, which traditional information has determined. Genius extends theſe limits by new acquiſitions; and the ſpirit of ſyſtem forms to itſelf an ideal empire by ſimple abſtractions alone. Good ſenſe ſees objects in their real light: Genius finds out objects till then unknown, the ſpirit of ſyſtem forms a wrong judgment of every thing, becauſe the exaggeration it applies to all things, is an obſtacle to their being accurately aſcertained. Experience forms good ſenſe; nature gives genius; and imagination encouraged by ſelf-love gives birth to the ſpirit of ſyſtem. Time alone, however, ſecures patronage and homage to genius, becauſe time alone accuſtoms men to comprehend thoſe truths, whoſe reſpective relations to each other are very numerous: the ſpirit of ſyſtem, on the contrary, is immediately ſurrounded with followers; becauſe it leſſens the labour of the underſtanding, by referring every thing that requires any preciſion to vague ideas; and becauſe it has watch-words, by which its diſciples eaſily know each other in the midſt of the greateſt obſcurity;

obſcurity; thus, whilſt the moſt ſteril and abridged vocabulary, is ſometimes ſufficient for the ſpirit of ſyſtem, genius muſt animate language, in every ſenſe, and as it were, imprint its own ſtamp upon it, if it aims at giving an explicit idea of the vigour and multiplicity of its conceptions.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

ON THE NOMINATION TO THE OFFICES OF INTENDANTS OF THE PROVINCES.

THE duty of the Intendants of the provinces is to inform, and ſecond the general adminiſtration throughout the whole extent of the department that is intruſted to them, it is therefore impoſſible to be too attentive to the choice made of perſons appointed to fill theſe places. An ancient cuſtom determines, that none but maſters of requeſts ſhall be appointed; and although the order of ſeniority is ſometimes followed, it very often happens, that from partial conſiderations, it is deviated from; which is ſtill worſe. Young men without any experience, or any other preparation, than

than their having launched out into the polite amuſements of the metropolis, and a knowledge of the *bon ton* of ſociety, have been ſent to govern a province, whoſe population exceeds that of ſundry kingdoms in Europe. And it was thought a proper excuſe to ſay, that theſe young men belonged to families long known in the magiſtracy; but are not the rights and the wants of the people known likewiſe in the annals of humanity? Undoubtedly, if ſuch a principle of adminiſtration is to be obſerved, it is very fortunate that the family of *Montmorency* does not deſire to be Intendants; for by the ſame rule, that mark of confidence ought to be given them from the very cradle.

THE maſters of requeſts are only eighty in number; it is therefore rare to find in them, a union of all the talents requiſite for ſuch an important office as that of Intendant, even by making a moſt impartial choice among thoſe, who qualify themſelves to be Intendants. I am therefore of opinion, that magiſtrates of a different order ought not to be excluded, when the

neceſſary abilities to excite the confidence of the ſovereign are diſcovered in them: for all theſe prerogatives, and diviſions, within a ſpace already too narrow, ſerve only to contract the reſources of adminiſtration.

THERE could be no real motive to limit the choice permanently, to the maſters of requeſt alone, but becauſe it was ſuppoſed their functions, particularly formed them for the duties of adminiſtration; but that is not the caſe; for until the moment in which they are deſigned to become Intendants, their whole buſineſs is to make their report to the council of requeſts, for annulling of ſentences; this kind of buſineſs habituates the mind indeed to a ſpecies of logic; but as they are always forced to judge between two given points, this practice, is no apprenticeſhip to adminiſtration, whoſe genius is entirely different, and a proper education for which, would rather require, that they ſhould early endeavour to diſcover what is not pointed out to them; to embrace ſeveral objects at once; to connect with facility the chain of ſeveral relative diſpoſitions; and to digeſt with regularity,

larity, a great variety of information. I wiſh alſo, to adviſe young magiſtrates, who are deſtined to the adminiſtration of provinces, to avoid carefully, that ſtiffneſs commonly acquired from the pride which adheres to collective bodies of men: in order to render their actions more conciliating, they ſhould diveſt themſelves a little of their perſonal vanity; for authority renders men proud; whilſt the diſcharge of its duties makes us modeſt; theſe duties then ought to be ſtudied and fully comprehended; both the heart and the mind muſt be deeply impreſſed with them; then, and it would be a very great advantage, no Intendant would covet the reputation of being the ſole promoter of the good that may be done in his department: then, they would not envy the ſhare of authority, the ſovereign might think proper to intruſt with the provincial adminiſtrations: they would find that it is ſtill a very great honour to adopt the elucidations of theſe adminiſtrations, to ſecond their labours, and to guide the opinion of government on that ſubject; but, it is unfortunate, that moſt men are very loath to give up the ſmalleſt, and even the

moſt burdenſome appendages of authority; and it is neceſſary to poſſeſs a certain elevation of mind, and ſublimity of ſentiment, in order to ſee ſomething more attracting than the pleaſure of commanding, in public offices of adminiſtration. I am convinced nevertheleſs, that in the provinces under provincial adminiſtrations, and in thoſe of the ſtates, the Intendants poſſeſs many ſurer methods of acquiring fame, and of favouring their ambitious views: but inſtead of being ſo quickly jealous of their prerogatives, inſtead of ſetting up authority, in oppoſition to authority, as if theirs alone iſſued from the ſovereign; it would be more becoming, if forgetting themſelves entirely, they were only anxious about the public good; then, every one would confide in them, every one would take a pleaſure in praiſing their abilities, and their character; whilſt the man who is anxious to ruſh into public notice, and to be active without any neceſſity for it, awakens and excites criticiſm, and malevolence.

It were much to be wiſhed that the magiſtrates who are appointed to be Intendants were

were to remain much longer reſident in the ſame provinces: knowledge is in all things the work of time, and it is a renunciation of a valuable advantage to forego that which is given by experience. I own that an Intendant, though tranſlated from one province to another, does not loſe the knowledge that reſults from general reſearches: but all the informations that are peculiar to places, and circumſtances, are thereby entirely loſt, and the improvements that were begun, are ſuſpended either through the inexperience, or the pride of his ſucceſſor.

THERE exiſts likewiſe another cuſtom, the inconvenience of which I had occaſion to aſcertain: the appointment of Intendants belongs only in part, to the adminiſtration of the finances: for it is the miniſter of the war department who alone receives the King's orders for their nomination to the frontier provinces: and as thoſe places are the moſt lucrative and honourable, it happens, that about the time when the Intendants of the internal provinces may reaſonably aſpire to be tranſlated to thoſe above mentioned, they ſtand leaſt in need of merit-

ing the approbation of the miniſter of the finances; and yet their connections with that department, are in all the generalities indiſcriminately, the moſt eſſential part of their functions.

LET it not be thought that in theſe diverſe obſervations, I have any peculiar perſons in view, who are now in place; it is always under a general aſpect that I conſider the ſubjects on which I expatiate: I know ſeveral Intendants who neither require to be curbed, nor to be encouraged; and I may ſay, that no miniſter ever took greater delight than I did in doing them juſtice, and ſetting a high value on their ſervices: but ſince I freely open my mind in this work, I muſt acknowledge, that I always conſidered the diſguſt they expreſſed at ſeeing a man at the head of the finances, who was not a magiſtrate, as a very narrow ſentiment: I do not know whether I am miſtaken; but it appears to me, that when this envious ſpirit peculiar to collective bodies, diſplays itſelf with eagerneſs, it is always attended with a difficiency of perſonal dignity: I am certain that MONTESQUIEU would not have pleaded

pleaded indiſcriminately for all preſidents of Parliament; nor HELVETIUS for the Farmers General; nor Mr. de MALESHERBES in our days, for all the magiſtrates of the court of aids: it is therefore, if I may be allowed to ſay it, from a ſenſe of our want of perſonal ſuperiority, that we are induced to aſſociate in pride, and to throw our mite into one common purſe.

CHAP. XXXII.

ON THE CHANGES OF PRINCIPLES AND PERSONS, IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE FINANCES.

WHEN men of common abilities are at the head of affairs, the public is often impatient for ſome revolution, and that ſentiment is natural: thoſe who live on hopes, commonly deſire a multiplicity of lotteries: however, thoſe continual alterations in principles, which are the ordinary conſequence of the ſucceſſion of miniſters in France; are very great misfortunes, and real obſtacles to the progreſs and permanency of uſeful eſtabliſhments; it is not ſolely to the diverſity of opinions, that theſe changes muſt

muſt be attributed; for the having an opinion of one's own in matters of adminiſtration is in fact, a mark of ſenſe, which is not given to every one: but vanity, pretenſions, jealouſy, thoſe conſtant attributes of human nature, put the new miniſter out of humour with all the ideas of his predeceſſor; and the more thoſe ideas were well received, the more offenſive they are to him: the abilities, or the virtues of a man ſo near him, are like a ſhade that obſcures his own ſplendour for ſome time; and to weaken the fame that is troubleſome to him, he blames what was done before him, he follows another path, and takes to his boſom and to his council, all thoſe who were neglected by the preceding miniſter.

THESE inconveniences, conſidered under a general aſpect, muſt be attributed to various cauſes. IN FRANCE, there is not any repreſentative body of the nation, aſſembled for the diſcuſſion of the great affairs of adminiſtration, nor any depoſitary, or guardian of thoſe principles that are conſecrated by reflection and experience.

THE

THE miniſters themſelves, deſirous of an abſolute authority over their reſpective departments, and always occupied with the means of obtaining that ſuperiority of favour and credit, which the faults of their colleagues give them room to hope for, are not collectively, the protectors of the principles applicable to each branch of adminiſtration with which they are ſeparately intruſted. The adminiſtration of the finances, more eſpecially, being naturally complicated, is ſtill more liable to eſcape their attention: beſides, the miniſter of that department, can eaſily ſubdue every opinion to his own, were it only, by making uſe, at proper ſeaſons, of the pliable argument of public credit, or of that idea to which every thing may be referred, namely, the intereſt of authority.

But, it will perhaps be obſerved, that ſome of theſe circumſtances are equally applicable to a great number of monarchical governments; and yet, all arrangements of adminiſtration appear to be more permanent in them, than in France: this is becauſe in moſt of theſe governments, they are guided, and as it were reſtrained by the laws of neceſſity;

ceſſity; whereas in France, where the fertility of the ſoil, and the proſperous ſtate of commerce, and of induſtry, triumph ſo often over the errors of government, they occaſionally act, in moſt arrangements made by adminiſtration, as if they only gambled for the overplus.

LASTLY, although France has had great miniſters in every line, perhaps the national character ſo well adapted to ſuch a variety of objects, is leſs calculated for the ſpirit of adminiſtration than for any other; that ſpirit requires a kind of deliberation, conſtancy and uniformity, which is not always reconcileable with its activity of imagination, and more eſpecially with that inſtantaneous ſenſibility which delights in a continual renewal of whatever ſtrikes the mind.

IT was therefore, in conſequence of theſe various conſiderations, that I wiſhed to inſure, as it were, a great part of the public adminiſtration, by eſtabliſhing provincial aſſemblies, which ſhould have been called together, to inquire into, and to preſerve the

good

good that might be done in each province; and which being a collective body under the ſanction of the laws, would ſoon have acquired a ſufficient conſiſtency not to be ſo eaſily expoſed to the frequent variations of ſyſtem, or to the inconſtant opinions of the miniſters of the finances.

WHAT renders the choice of thoſe men who are fit for the firſt places of adminiſtration, the more difficult in France is the too diſtinctly marked limits, which ſeparate the various ranks, and the law of cuſtom, which circumſcribes the moſt important nominations within a very narrow circle. Uſually, the miniſters of the finances, and very often, even the ſecretaries of ſtate, are appointed from among the magiſtrates whoſe functions are exerciſed in the council; and independent of the maſters of the requeſts, who devoid of experience, generally have not the leaſt idea of public affairs, the eligible candidates are limited to thirty three Intendants of provinces, and forty four State-counſellors; and as ſeveral of the latter, either from their great age, or from choice, have not any ambition, the number of thoſe who are on the liſt for the great offices,

of

of ſtate is reduced to fifty or ſixty: which is very ſmall indeed, to expect always to find men of tranſcendent abilities.

As long however as the choice of a miniſter of the finances is to be reſtrained to one rank in ſociety, I think the body of magiſtrates above mentioned, deſerves the preference; and it is perhaps for want of a ſufficent reflection on the extent and diverſity of the functions of a comptroller general, or miniſter of the finances in France, that it is often ſaid, "it is from the body of financiers, or merchants that he ought to be choſen." I believe in this caſe, the word *financiers* propagates the illuſion; the reſources that a comptroller general muſt find in all extraordinary circumſtances, certainly require that he ſhould perfectly underſtand the nature of public credit, and be thorougly ſkilled in all money tranſactions that depend on public confidence: but beſides that, there are a great many bankers, merchants, and financiers, whoſe notions on that branch of adminiſtration would be quite abſurd, they would likewiſe be in general too great ſtrangers to a multiplicity of informations and reflections, which are

alſo indiſpenſably neceſſary in the exerciſe of a branch of adminiſtration whoſe inſpection extends to the totality of the revenue, and of the expence, and has an influence directly and indirectly on the proſperity of the ſtate, and the happineſs of the people.

I am therefore of opinion, that of all the incomplete and partial preparations, theſe which the functions of an Intendant of a province furniſh, approaches neareſt to the knowledge neceſſary for a miniſter of the finances.

But the wiſeſt meaſure would undoubtedly be, not to make choice of that miniſter, neither on account of his rank, his ſituation in life, nor any other conventional token; but rather by the qualities of his heart and of his mind: a very difficult undertaking indeed; more eſpecially for ſovereigns before whom the truth is always concealed, or at leaſt diſguiſed: accuſtomed from their infancy to keep thoſe who attend upon them at a great diſtance, or to let them only approach their perſons, in thoſe moments

moments that are devoted to pleaſure, the opinion they form of mankind depends, for the moſt part, on the ſuggeſtions of the few courtiers they admit to their intimacy; and how can an impartial ſpirit be expected from thoſe who are prepoſſeſſed with ideas of fortune and ambition? the firſt ſprings of theſe two ardent paſſions, are love, and hate, which prevail according to their intereſt.

THE art of court intrigue has likewiſe made ſuch a progreſs, that the very great delicacy with which it is carried on, deceives the moſt attentive; its ſubterfuges are incredible: it knows how to aſſume every form, the moſt ſubtil addreſs; audacious falſehood, the appearance of ſincerity, and even the maſk of auſterity. It ſtudies the motions, the habits, and even the books read by ſovereigns, in order to diſcover what may beſt promote its views, and facilitate its plots. The Caliph Haroun-al-Raſchid, undoubtedly after having experienced that truth never gains acceſs to the palace of Kings, uſed to diſguiſe himſelf in the night time, to learn the ſecret opinions of his

people: at preſent, ſuch a method would be very favourable to court intrigue: for thoſe who are verſed in it, would not fail to ſuborn ſome of their ſubaltern dependants, to repeat within hearing of the monarch, only what they would wiſh to have him know.

ALAS! how many ſnares are laid on all ſides for ſovereigns: and how indulgent ought we to be when they are deceived! they perhaps poſſeſs only one method of forming a ſure idea of the abilities and merit of thoſe who are at a diſtance from the court, and from their perſons: they ought, long before the time when court-intrigues begin to operate, to liſten attentively to the voice of reputation, to that faint but continual echo, which in ſome meaſure reſembles thoſe ſlight ſhocks of an earthquake, which are ſo eaſily diſcerned in the calm and ſilence of night; but ceaſe to be heard, when men on the return of day, take poſſeſſion of the earth and fill it with the noiſe of their labour, and the clamour of their paſſions.

AND

And yet, as nothing is perfect, we ought not to conceal, that fame though an almoſt unerring guide, is not a ſufficient ſecurity for the choice of a miniſter of the finances. Let the Sovereign have a General to appoint, and he may ſafely truſt to the public voice; for thoſe talents, and that kind of merit, which give reputation to ſuch, or ſuch an officer, are preciſely the qualities which anſwer the views of the Sovereign, and are to determine his confidence: it is in campaigns, that thoſe whom the public voice diſtinguiſhes have acquired their fame; and they are deſtined by the Sovereign to the command of his armies: the ſame reflections may likewiſe be applied to Ambaſſadors, to Preſidents of ſupreme courts, and ſundry other places, in which the ſame kind of merit is as requiſite for the ſecond rank, as is required for the firſt offices of the ſtate; but the reputation of the candidates for the miniſtry of the finances never affords more than an imperfect aſſurance of their real abilities for that poſt, becauſe the functions in which they have diſtinguiſhed themſelves, required only a part of the knowledge and

qualifications neceſſary for a general adminiſtrator of the finances.

THUS the reputation of an excellent Intendant of a province, whoſe duties are nevertheleſs circumſcribed, and whoſe line of conduct is traced, either by inſtructions from the miniſter, or the will of the Sovereign, is not a ſufficient warrant that this Intendant will not give himſelf up to erroneous ſyſtems, when he ſhall have the power of directing the general adminiſtration at his will: neither will that reputation be a proof of his knowledge of the circulation of the ſpecie, of the art of maintaining of public credit, and of a variety of other combinations foreign to his firſt ſtudies.

IN the ſame manner, the reputation of a towering genius in matters of finance, who ſhould be perfectly acquainted with the legiſlation of taxes, and of fiſcal demands, will not be a ſecurity for that uprightneſs of heart and that ſound mind, which endeavours to find the proſperity of the ſtate in the eaſy circumſtances of the lower claſs of the

the people, and the love and confidence of the nation.

So likewiſe, the reputation of a ſkillful merchant, who ſhould diſplay the greateſt abilities in the conduct of his own affairs, and who ſhould be the oracle of the chambers of commerce, will not inſure his pure and diſintereſted condu& in a public line: that reputation, more eſpecially, will not be a warrant for that elevation of character which preſerves men from the inebriation cauſed by the pride of a high ſtation, and that dignity in his manners, without which a man is always in France, on the verge of being deſpiſed.

Thus, the reputation of a learned reporting judge, who, in a litigious cauſe, ſhould follow and unveil with great ſagacity, the quirks and windings of error, and inſincerity, will not be a ſecurity that his mind, bent by habit, ſhall know how to attend to new objects, or how to comprehend at once, a great diverſity of connexions, and to know likewiſe, how to diſcover by its own

powers, all thoſe towards which his attention ſhould not be directed.

LASTLY, in the ſame manner, the reputation of a philoſophical writer, who ſhould ably diſcuſs the moſt important queſtions of adminiſtration, will not warrant his firmneſs, ability, and prudence in his actions, in the ſame degree, as he was fertile, and bold in his aſſertions.

WE ought not therefore, to be ſurpriſed at the number of difficulties to be overcome, and the great riſks to be run in the choice of a miniſter of the finances: we ought not to rely on what we cannot hope for; and it would be wrong to judge of the conduct of the acting miniſter, by comparing it with an ideal phantom conceived by imagination: and perhaps it may be of ſome conſequence to obſerve, that men never form the idea of perfection with more ſelf-complacency and delicacy, than when they may, by means of theſe unnatural fancies, eclipſe or leſſen whatever they compare with them. Oh! how difficult, how rare to be found, are an exact proportion, and perfect moderation

tion

tion, either in our judgment, or our thoughts! We are too apt to believe we poſſeſs that greatneſs we exaggerate, that ſkill we find wanting in others, and that virtue which we require from them,

CHAP. XXXIII.

CONCISE ENUMERATION OF THE SOURCES OF THE POWER OF FRANCE.

THIS rich and ſuperb kingdom contains, I believe, nearly twenty-ſix millions of ſouls.

ITS extent is about twenty-ſeven thouſand ſquare leagues.

THE ſoil of this fortunate country is not averſe to any of the productions of Europe, and ſeveral are peculiar to it.

A GREAT number of navigable rivers, ſome canals, and nearly, nine thouſand leagues of public roads, facilitate the interior

rior communications of France, and the ocean, and Mediterranean ſea water its coaſts.

A SALUBRIOUS and temperate climate would render the ordinary life of man longer than in any other part of the world, if moral cauſes did not ſometimes oppoſe the favourable influence of nature.

THE induſtry of the inhabitants of France is ſo diverſified, that this kingdom perhaps is in no real want of the works of art of other nations.

WEALTHY colonies in America form a part of the King's poſſeſſions; and products to the amount of above one hundred and twenty millions of livres are annually imported into France.

THE contributions of the nation, added to the domain revenues of the crown, and the patrimonial eſtates of towns, hoſpitals, &c. amount to ſix hundred millions.

THE clergy poſſeſs a yearly income of one hundred and thirty millions.

THE annual balance of commerce in favour of France, might be eſtimated before the laſt war at ſeventy millions.

THE gold and ſilver ſpecie in circulation in the kingdom, amounts to above two thouſand millions of livres.

THE annual increaſe of that wealth may be valued at forty millions.

AND this increaſe is probably equal to the augmentation of ſpecie in all the other ſtates of Europe collectively.

WHAT a wonderful diſplay of power! How many motives for being contented with a prudent method of making the beſt of ſuch numerous bleſſings! How many reaſons for not being jealous of other nations! And what a ſource of regret, when the earth is imbrued with blood to endeavour to gain a ſmall increaſe of uſeleſs ſuperiority, at the expence of public felicity, to which ſo much may, and ought to be added.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

ON WAR.

AH! How impatient I have been to diſcuſs this ſubject, and how earneſtly has my ſoul longed to expatiate on the evils attached to this dreadful calamity! it ſtops the courſe of ſalutary plans; it dries up the ſources of proſperity: it diverts men's minds from attending to the happineſs of nations; it even ſometimes ſuſpends the ideas of juſtice and humanity; in ſhort, it expels all beneficent and humane ſentiments, and places enmity, hatred, the neceſſity of oppreſſion, and the rage of devaſtation in their ſtead.

THE firſt idea that preſents itſelf to me, when I conſider the origin of moſt wars, is, that thoſe great political combinations, which have ſo often kindled the firebrand of diſcord, and occaſioned ſo many devaſtations, ſcarcely ever deſerved that ſhare of admiration which was beſtowed upon them; and I ſhall at leaſt make bold to ſay, that when a ſtate is arrived at an eminent degree of power and ſplendour, it muſt be for want of a ſufficiently general conception, and of an exact knowledge of its means and its reſources, that continual anxieties are entertained, and the duration of the public tranquillity made dependent on ſo many uncertain ſpeculations. I ſhall not even be afraid of obſerving, that in a nation under the above predicament, it is a real misfortune for the people, when, from a ſpirit of imitation, government habituates itſelf to conſider its ſtrength as dependent on thoſe exterior ties, whoſe contexture and combination form what is called *political ſcience*. Then, the ſubtleſt ideas on the balance of power take the lead of every other thought, and continually occupy the attention; then, thoſe frequent

wars

wars of competitorſhip ſpring up, whereof the firſt, renders a ſecond more probable, for in proportion as a ſtate is weakened by a war, it is ſo much the more apt ſoon to become jealous, becauſe the ſentiment of jealouſy is only founded on compariſon, and in the courſe of ſeveral revolving years, it is ſometimes one power, and ſometimes another, that attracts the attention of politicians, thus the employment of every nation, in every age, is to endeavour continually to reduce other nations, to the ſame low ſtate to which it has brought itſelf by its errors; whilſt, if it was not to waſte its ſtrength, if it was to ſtudy the proper uſe of its means, and to make the beſt of them, with the help of a prudent adminiſtration, it would arrive, without any effort, at that degree of ſuperiority which it wiſhes to attain.

I MUST likewiſe remark, that this kind of ſuperiority is the only one whoſe conſequences are as it were univerſal. The triumphs of war undoubtedly raiſe a nation above that which is conquered; but as theſe triumphs commonly require long efforts

efforts, and great ſacrifices, the weakneſs that reſults from them, neceſſarily changes the proportions that exiſted between its ſtrength and that of the great ſtates that took no part in its quarrel, and whoſe proſperity increaſed during the peace they enjoyed.

LASTLY, we cannot deny, that the grandeur at which a ſtate arrives through the prudence of its adminiſtration is the moſt important, and that which moſt commands the reſpect of other nations: they are much more jealous of the ſmalleſt increaſe of dominions procured by means of war, or policy, than of that augmentation of power which is founded upon order; and this ſentiment is natural: for that propenſity which originated in the prudent conduct of a ſovereign, makes his virtues recollected; and they are conſidered as a ſafeguard againſt the abuſe he might make of the increaſe of his ſtrength.

IN our day, commerce has been the chief cauſe of making the earth a ſcene of blood; that looſe, and indefinite idea, adds new luſtre to the ſcience of politics; and the

the public opinion excited by a word, which repreſents univerſal intereſt, is often deceived in its judgments. I would willingly aſk thoſe who are ever ready to give their voice for war from ſuch motives: are you acquainted with the balance of the commerce of your country? Have you ſtudied its elements? Have you ſufficiently examined, if the additional traffic in which you deſire to participate, will increaſe the national wealth; and do you diſtinguiſh well the ſource, and the effects of that wealth? Have you balanced the advantages that you expect from war, againſt the damage which may reſult to your eſtabliſhed commerce, from the riſe of the rate of intereſt occaſioned by the multiplicity of the government loans, and the additional riſe in the price of induſtry occaſioned by the increaſe of taxes? Are you aſſured that whilſt you endeavour to open a new branch of commerce by the ſword, another will not eſcape you, either on account of the regard you will be forced to ſhow to your ancient allies, or of the conceſſions that will be required by the new? Laſtly, are you acquainted with the full extent of your preſent proſperity, and have you eſtimated the extent

of

of the ſacrifices that even the end at which you aſpire may deſerve? Nothing is more ſimple than the word commerce, when only its vulgar acceptation is conſidered: nothing is more complicated, when it is applied to the univerſality of exchanges, to the importance of ſome, to the uſeleſſneſs of others, to the diſadvantage of ſeveral; in ſhort, to political views, to labour, to taxes, and to all the unexpected combinations that war and great events occaſion: a deliberate and profound reflection ought therefore to be employed before we determine on kindling the torch of diſcord thoughout the univerſe, for commercial intereſt; and we ought never to forget, that in times of peace, a diminution of certain duties, a bounty on ſome exportations, a privilege obtained among ſome foreign nations, and a variety of other benefits reſulting from a prudent adminiſtration, are often of more value than the advantages propoſed to be gained with fleets and armies.

NATIONS in their ſavage ſtate, were guided by blind, and unruly paſſions, and theſe paſſions have been moderated in a

great degree by the effect of civilization; but the multiplicity and the confuſion of diverſe intereſts, which the ideas of money, commerce, national wealth, and the balance of power have introduced, are become ſo many other cauſes of enmity and jealouſy; and as the ſcience of government is not improved in proportion to the contradictions it has to reconcile, and the difficulties it has to overcome, mankind ſtill enjoys but imperfectly, the change made in its condition.

I COULD wiſh a conſideration that always made a deep impreſſion on me, were ſeriouſly reflected on: moſt governments appear ſatisfied, when after a bloody and expenſive war, they have made an honourable treaty of peace; undoubtedly ſuch an end of a war may be ſufficient for a nation, which having been unjuſtly attacked, was compelled to repel force by force: but a nation that might have avoided the enmity of other powers by more circumſpect proceedings, or another, which has entered into a war from a political ſpeculation, cannot be ignorant that the amount

of

of the advantages they enjoy in conſequence of the treaty of peace, is not the only object worthy of their attention; they have alſo to conſider, what would have been their ſituation at the time ſuch a treaty is made, if war had not interrupted the courſe of their proſperity.

Such compariſons would have often been very uſeful to all the ſtates of Europe, and Great Britain more eſpecially would have been greatly inſtructed thereby: but not being able to offer ſo general a ſtatement, I ſhall limit my reflections to thoſe which may be applied to France.

Let us ſuppoſe a war, during which this kingdom ſhould be obliged to alienate from fifty to ſixty millions of its annual revenue to pay the intereſts of the loans which the preparations for war, the expences of each campaign, and the paying off of debts ſhould have rendered neceſſary: and let us next take a rapid view of the different uſes government might have made of that revenue, not only towards the increaſe of pub-

lic

lic felicity, but alſo in the augmentation of its military forces.

THE diſtribution I am going to make of that revenue, does not indicate my opinion; but in a calculation of this kind, I deſire even to obviate any objections, by ſhewing how the different wiſhes that are formed in a monarchy, both with reſpect to happineſs and power, would have been entirely accompliſhed.

IN the firſt place, I find that with eighteen millions of that annual revenue, the companies of the regiments might have been nearly carried to their full complement, and the army augmented with fifty thouſand foot ſoldiers, and ten or twelve thouſand horſe.

I FIND, in the next place, that two millions of that revenue, which in time of peace would have paid the intereſt of a loan of forty millions, would have added to our navy, thirty men of war, and a proportionable number of frigates; which might have been maintained with four millions

yearly: thus we ſee twenty-four millions of that revenue ſolely devoted to the military ſervice.

LET us now allow the ſurplus, for the diverſe branches of adminiſtration, and let us conſider its conſequences.

WITH eighteen millions yearly, the price of ſalt might have been rendered uniform throughout the kingdom, by reducing it a third, in the provinces of the little gabels, and two-thirds, in the provinces of the great gabels, and not increaſing the charges of the privileged provinces.

WITH four or five millions, the interior parts of the kingdom might have been freed from all cuſtom-houſe duties, without raiſing thoſe levied on the imports or exports of the kingdom, and without carrying to account, the improvements I pointed out when treating on that ſubject.

WITH two millions, five hundred thouſand livres, ſerving to pay the intereſt of ſucceſſive loans up to fifty millions, the neceſſary

ceſſary canals that are wanting in France might have been executed.

WITH one million yearly, government would have been enabled to give ſufficient bounties to all eſtabliſhments of induſtry, that might increaſe the proſperity of the kingdom.

WITH one million, five hundred thouſand livres, the ſums yearly deſtined to give work to the poor would have been doubled; and at the ſame time, the inhabitants of the country would have been greatly benefited, as vicinal communications would have been multiplied.

WITH a like ſum, the priſons throughout the kingdom would have been improved in a few years, and all charitable eſtabliſhments brought to their perfection.

AND with two millions yearly, allotted to that purpoſe, the clearing of waſte lands, would have received an incredible activity.

THESE diſtributions compoſe thirty-one millions; which joined to twenty-four millions for military expences, make together the ſum of fifty-five millions employed as above, a ſum equal to that which I ſuppoſe alienated from the public revenue for the annual expences of war.

IT is apparent, that it is eaſy to modify the above diſtributions in ſeveral different manners; but it is ſufficient to perceive the immenſe advantages which this ſtatement preſents, either for the ſtrength and proſperity of the ſtate, or for the alleviation of the indigent claſſes of the nation.

THIS is not all, for if we carry to account the diminution of commerce which reſults from a war of five or ſix years duration, we ſhall find that the kingdom is deprived of a conſiderable augmentation of wealth.

LASTLY, war, and the loans it occaſions, cauſe a ſenſible riſe in the rate of intereſt; whilſt peace, under a rational adminiſtration, lowers it annually, were it only through the effect of the increaſe of ſpecie, and

and of the influence of the ſtated reimburſements. This ſucceſſive reduction of intereſt is likewiſe a ſource of ineſtimable advantages to commerce, agriculture and finances.

Now let the above reſults be compared with the benefits which a fortunate war (and they are not all ſo) may procure to a kingdom arrived to the degree of proſperity of France; let that compariſon be made, not in a deſultory manner, but with the help of reflection and ſcience, and it will be found that for the moſt part, ten ſeeds have been ſown to reap one.

CERTAINLY, with ſo many means of power, a government may expect with great probability, to humble its rivals, and to extend its dominions: but to make uſe of its forces for the felicity of its ſubjects, to command reſpect without the aſſiſtance and the dangers of reſtleſs politicks; theſe are the real, and obligatory advantages to be made of the greatneſs of its ſituation, it ſhows at once a knowledge of its aſcendency and of its proper uſes; then it imitates thoſe kindly rivers, whoſe rapid current cannot

be ſtopped, but which in their majeſtic courſe favour navigation, facilitate commerce, and fertilize the country without devaſtation, or deſtruction.

It is not war, but a prudent and peaceful adminiſtration alone, that can procure to France, all that it ſtill wants.

The amount of the ſpecie in the kingdom is immenſe; but the want of public confidence, very often occaſions the greateſt part of it to be hoarded.

The population of the kingdom is immenſe; but the exceſs and the nature of the taxes render the country inhabitants poor, and diſcourage them: the human ſpecies is weakened from too great wretchedneſs; and the number of children who die before the age at which ſtrength is diſplayed, ſurpaſſes the natural proportion.

The ſovereign's revenue is immenſe; but the public debt conſumes two fifths of it; and it is only with the produce of a prudent economy

economy, and by lowering of the rate of intereſt, that this charge can be leſſened.

THE contributions of the nation, more eſpecially, are immenſe; but it is only by conſtantly ſtrengthening public credit, that government can be enabled to find ſufficient reſources, in extraordinary circumſtances.

LASTLY, the balance of commerce in favour of the kingdom, is a prodigious ſource of riches; but war ſuſpends its courſe; and an important reflection ariſes out of that obſervation; which is, that the nation which derives the greateſt advantages from peace, makes alſo the greateſt ſacrifices, when it renounces that calm and proſperous ſtate.

How will the caſe be then, if, which cannot be avoided, we join to all thoſe conſiderations, the affecting repreſentation of all the evils that attend on war? How will it appear, if we were to endeavour to ſet a price on the life and ſufferings of men? And as the ſpeculations of the mind are uncertain, as arguments are often deficient in that energy which belongs only to the affec-

tions of the ſoul, we cannot wiſh too ardently, that thoſe profound ſentiments of humanity, which animate every thought, may poſſeſs the hearts of the miniſters of Kings. Then, the examination of the motives that may determine the commencement of a war, will appear to be the moſt ſerious of all deliberations; then, a ſenſible emotion will affect all thoſe, who may be called to that diſcuſſion; then, in the midſt of a council, in which endeavours might be uſed to determine the opinion of the ſovereign, by political calculations; the moſt honeſt of his ſervants, would perhaps dare to hold this language to him.

" SIRE, war is the ſource of ſo many evils;
" it is ſo terrible a ſcourge, that a ſenſible
" and provident ſovereign, never ought to
" undertake it without the moſt evidently
" juſt motives: and it is the duty of the
" greateſt monarch in the univerſe, to give
" the example of that morality of ſovereigns,
" which aſſures the happineſs of humanity
" and the tranquillity of nations. Do not
" give away, SIRE, to vain anxieties, nor to
" uncertain expectations. Ah! what have

you

" you to fear, and what ſhould excite your
" jealouſy? You reign over twenty-ſix mil-
" lions of men; providence has bleſſed
" your empire, by diſtributing in every part,
" with a bountiful hand, all ſorts of pro-
" ductions; your kingdom acquires every
" year, as much ſpecie as the reſt of Europe
" collectively; you enjoy immenſe reve-
" nues, and their prudent diſtribution may
" enable you to maintain a navy and armies
" capable of commanding the reſpect of
" thoſe nations that are jealous of your
" power. The war to which you are ad-
" viſed, may very likely coſt you eight, or
" nine hundred millions of livres: and
" though victory was to be a conſtant at-
" tendant on your arms, you will devote to
" death, or to cruel ſufferings, ſo great a
" number of your ſubjects, that if any per-
" ſon who could look into futurity, was
" at this inſtant to ſet the liſt before your
" eyes, you would ſhrink back with horror.
" Still this is not all; you are going to
" overburden your people with new taxes,
" who have ſcarcely had any reſpite; you
" are going to ſlacken the activity of com-
" merce and manufactures; in order

" to

" to procure ſeamen and ſoldiers; men
" bred to huſbandry will be preſſed, and
" taken from their country labours; and
" an hundred thouſand families will per-
" haps be deprived of the hands that feed
" them. And yet, though crowned with
" the greateſt ſucceſſes, after ſo many evils,
" after ſo many calamities, what will you
" obtain? A tranſient ally, uncertain gra-
" titude, perhaps an iſland at the diſtance
" of two thouſand leagues from your em-
" pire, or ſome new ſubjects in another he-
" miſphere? Alas! you are called to no-
" bler conqueſts: turn your eyes to the in-
" terior parts of your kingdom; conſider
" what communications and canals are ſtill
" wanting; look at thoſe peſtilential marſhes
" that ought to be drained, and thoſe waſte-
" lands, whoſe cultivation would be aſſured
" on the firſt glimpſe of aſſiſtance from
" government; look on that part of your
" people, who would be encouraged to new
" undertakings by a diminution of taxes;
" look more eſpecially, at that other really
" wretched claſs, which ſtands in need of
" immediate aſſiſtance to reſiſt the miſery
" of its ſituation. And yet, to effectuate

" ſo

" ſo many benefits, a ſmall part of the ca-
" pital you are going to conſume in the war
" to which you are adviſed, would perhaps
" be ſufficient. Are not the numerous in-
" habitants of your extenſive dominions
" ſufficient to gratify your love of the peo-
" ple? And if I may be allowed to ſay it,
" equal to the utmoſt extent of the good it
" is in the power of one man to do? But if
" you are deſirous of acquiring more ſub-
" jects, you may have them without blood-
" ſhed, and without fighting battles; for
" they will propagate on every ſide in your
" empire, under the influence of the be-
" neficent means that are in your hands:
" a good government multiplies the race of
" men, as the morning-dews of the ſpring
" nouriſh the ſhoots of a plant: therefore,
" before you ſeek beyond the ſeas, for thoſe
" new ſubjects, yet unknown to you, re-
" flect that in order to acquire them, you
" are going to ſacrifice a greater number,
" who love you, whom you love, whoſe
" fidelity you have experienced, and whoſe
" happineſs is intruſted to your care.
" What perſonal motive can therefore de-
" termine you to war? Is it the ſplendour

" of

" of the ſucceſſes you hope for? Is it the
" ambition of a greater fame to be handed
" down to poſterity? But is renown con-
" fined alone, to blood-ſhed and devaſtation;
" and does not that monarch acquire any,
" who diffuſes happineſs and proſperity
" throughout his extenſive dominions?
" Titus reigned only three years; yet his
" name has been tranſmitted from age to
" age, by the love of nations, and is ſtill
" made uſe of in the eulogiums beſtowed
" on ſovereigns.

" Do not doubt it, SIRE, a prudent admi-
" niſtration will be more valuable to you,
" than the moſt excellent political ſyſtems;
" and if to ſo much ſtrength, you unite
" the ſway and influence acquired over
" other nations, by a diſtinguiſhed character
" of juſtice and moderation, you will en-
" joy at once, the greateſt glory and the
" moſt formidable power. Alas! Sire, pre-
" ſent this magnificent ſpectacle to the
" world: and then, if you deſire triumphal
" arches, ſhew yourſelf in your provinces;
" and preceded by the fame of your good-
" neſs, appear ſurrounded with the bleſ-

ſings

" ſings of your people and the heart felt ac-
" clamations of a ſenſible nation, made
" happy by its ſovereign."

SUCH is nearly the language that an honeſt miniſter deeply impreſſed with the conſciouſneſs of his diverſe duties might hold; I cannot believe that ſuch reflections would be foreign to political deliberations: at firſt, they would be thought extraordinary, and the miniſter who ſhould argue in this manner, would not be accounted a good ſtateſman: but as reaſon has its proper dignity and aſcendency, the miniſter who ſhould inliſt under its banners, and who ſhould boldly, and without any perſonal pretenſions, dare to maintain great truths, would perhaps force his way through prejudice, or habitual ideas. Thoſe ideas, I own, have a very great authority; and they ſometimes poſſeſs the mind in ſuch a manner, that it becomes foreign to the moſt natural ſentiments. I cannot remember without ſhuddering, having ſeen the following enumeration, in a ſtatement of the money required for the exigencies of war:

FORTY

FORTY thouſand men to be embarked for the colonies -	40,000
To be deducted for the firſt year's mortality - - -	13,333
REMAINDER - -	26,667

THE pay of whom, at the rate of, &c.

A CLERK in office makes this calculation in cool blood! A miniſter too commonly takes notice only of the ſtatement of the probable expences, and turns without remorſe, to the next leaf, to examine the reſult of the whole.

How can we forbear indulging profound ſentiments of grief on ſuch occaſions! Alas! if by any law of nature unknown to me, mankind deſerved ſo much indifference, I ſhould be much in the wrong to write, and to be ſo earneſtly anxious about their fate; I myſelf muſt be only a vile maſs of duſt, which the wind of life ſets in motion for a few moments: but I entertain a higher idea of our exiſtence, and of the ſpirit by which

it is animated; I entertain a higher idea of thoſe relative impreſſions which the Divine hand has ſtamped upon us, and which connect us with each other.

CITIZENS, it is ſaid, owe themſelves to their country: undoubtedly they do; but it is the duty of government to fix the meaſure of that debt; thus, the ſacrifices it requires, are juſt, or unjuſt, ſupportable, or terrible, according to the wiſdom of its deliberations.

THOSE who apologiſe for war will ſay; mankind has always been in a ſtate of warfare! Undoubtedly they have: ſtorms have alſo deſtroyed the crops in all ages; the plague has ſcattered its envenomed breath; religious intolerance has ſacrificed its victims; and crimes of every kind have deſolated the earth! But on the other hand, reaſon has obſtinately fought againſt folly, morality againſt vices, art againſt ſickneſs, and the induſtry of men againſt the rigours of bad ſeaſons. If barbarous nations, condemned to want and wretchedneſs by their ignorance, have been led on to countries in which

which the progreſs of arts, and a variety of riches promiſed them luxuries till then unknown! We can eaſily conceive the motives of ſuch invaſions, when humanity and juſtice are ſet aſide: but in our days, when the general perfection of induſtry, and the knowledge of commerce have rendered the enjoyments of nations more equal; war ſeems to depend more on the private ambition of ſovereigns, and the reſtleſs ſpirit of their counſellors.

But I hear it ſtated as the laſt objection, that men delight in running hazards, and often ſeek them of themſelves! I own it: ſeveral, in that purſuit, attain diſtinguiſhed honours, and great fortunes: but thoſe who receive only the moſt indiſpenſably neceſſary ſubſiſtence as a compenſation for the life they riſk; if they are not inliſted by violence, if they are not reſtrained by diſcipline, are at leaſt retained under their colours, from exalted ſentiments excited by example and opinion; but even ſuppoſing that ſome men placed themſelves voluntarily in a ſituation liable to calamities; will theſe calamities change their nature? the

the ignorance of the vulgar is a kind of protracted minority; and neither their firſt choice, nor their firſt emotions are to be conſidered with regard to thoſe ſituations into which they are hurried by circumſtances. Their ſentiments ought to be aſcertained in thoſe moments in which under the moſt excruciating pains, but ſtill alive, they are carried away by thouſands from the fatal field in which they have been mowed down by the enemy: their ſentiments ought to be aſcertained, when in thoſe tremendous places, where they are heaped on each other, and where the tortures they bear to preſerve a languiſhing exiſtence, prove too forcibly the value they ſet on their lives, and the greatneſs of the ſacrifice to which they have expoſed themſelves: their ſentiments ought alſo to be aſcertained in thoſe moments in which, perhaps, in addition to ſo many evils, the bitter remembrance of the momentary error, which has conducted them to that fate, occurs to their minds: their ſentiments ought more eſpecially to be aſcertained, when on board thoſe ſhips on fire, in which the moſt cruel death ſtares them in the face, when on duty upon thoſe ramparts, on which a ſubterraneous report

convinces them, that they are going to be buried under a tremendous heap of ſtones and rubbiſh: but the earth covers them! the ocean ſwallows them up! and we forget them! their voice in the ſilence of the grave can no longer arraign the calamities of war! hard-hearted ſurvivors that we are! Whilſt we tread on mutilated bodies and ſhattered bones, we teſtify our joy at the glory and honours, of which we alone are become the heirs!

LET me not be reproached with having dwelt too long on theſe melancholy deſcriptions: they cannot be too often repeated, ſo much are we accuſtomed in the very midſt of ſociety, to conſider war, and all its horrors, ſolely as an honourable occupation for our illuſtrious youth, as an exerciſe of their courage, and the means of acquiring the abilities of general officers. And ſuch is the effect of this tranſient delirium, that what is only the meer rumour of the various polite aſſemblies in the capital, is ſometimes taken for the general wiſh of the nation. Alas! you who govern, do not be deceived by that rumour: thoſe whoſe impulſe you are ſo ready to follow, will ſoon

wonder at your condeſcenſion; ſo ſhallow are their ſentiments, and more eſpecially, ſo little are they conformable to their real intereſt; but thoſe who have nothing to do, delight in novelty: and after a long peace, they are impatient for the tumult of war: as we ſometimes ſee ſhepherds in the highlands tired with the uniformity of their lives, wiſhing for a ſtorm, or a tempeſt, that agitated nature may preſent them a new ſpectacle to their eyes.

NEITHER ought we to forget, that in the midſt of the buſtle of ſociety, the mind is only ſet in motion by ſimple ideas, as it has not time to attend to deliberate diſcuſſions: thus, the hope of a ſucceſsful enterprize, the ſplendour of a victory, the humbling of a nation we are jealous of; are the ideas that are indulged with avidity: but the greatneſs of the expence, the fortunate and fertile uſe, that expence might otherwiſe be put to; and alas! muſt I ſay it? the death and deſtruction of thoſe men, whoſe funeral obſequies we do not behold; all thoſe diverſe conſiderations which ought to be connected with each other in our

minds, are almoſt always diſperſed, or their impreſſion is too tranſitory.

It is therefore the duty of thoſe men whoſe reflections are more general and comprehenſive, of thoſe who are guided by the two great lights, of thought and feeling, to ſtart, to defend, to animate if poſſible, rational and proſperous ideas; it is their duty to tear off the veil that conceals them, in order to give them full ſplendour and influence: it is alſo their duty not to be faſcinated by the illuſions of falſe glory, but rather to reſerve their pureſt homage for thoſe general and beneficent virtues, that are above all, and before all things, the tutelar genius of nations. As for me, far from regreting that I have oppoſed, to the beſt of my abilities, thoſe chimeras which are deſtructive of the happineſs of mankind, and of the real ſtrength of ſtates; far from being afraid of having manifeſted too much zeal for truths that are repugnant to ſo many paſſions and prejudices: I look upon theſe truths to be ſo uſeful, neceſſary, and ſo entirely juſt; and I am ſo deeply impreſſed with them, that after having ſupported them with my

feeble endeavours during my miniſtry, and after having endeavoured to diffuſe the knowledge of them even in my retreat, I could wiſh the laſt drop of my blood were employed in imprinting them upon men's minds.

It is you, more eſpecially, whom I invite to ſupport theſe principles; and who ought to do it, you who are diſtinguiſhed by the character of your ſtation, and the rank you occupy in the church: never forget that you are the miniſters of peace; and when you are performing the ceremony of bleſſing the banners, when you conſecrate victories, and trophies of war, let your hearts be ſenſible above all things, to the misfortunes of humanity, and let your eloqence recall them to the conſciences of ſovereigns; leave to the world and its hiſtorians, the care of celebrating the heroes of death and vengeance; for, amidſt the tumult of their deſtructive paſſions, compaſſion for mankind is your province: cauſe the ſovereign to be loved for his virtues, and his miniſters for their wiſdom and prudence: but never adopt the language of courtiers,

when you ſpeak in the name of HIM before whom, all the powers on earth are nothing.

THE ſubject I am now treating, concerns every nation; and we cannot remark without regret, that in ſeveral ſtates, war is not the only ſcourge that multiplies the calamities of mankind: they are alſo increaſed by that abſolutely military genius which is ſometimes the conſequence, and at others the forerunner of war: already, ſeveral ſtates are nothing but immenſe barracks; and the ſucceſſive increaſe of diſciplined armies augments taxes, fear, and ſlavery in an equal proportion; in ſhort, by an unfortunate re-action, it happens, that the exceſſive expences which are the effect of this compulſive ſituation, inſpire a deſire to turn them to account, by conqueſts: and in proportion as ſovereigns extend their poſſeſſions, deſpotiſm becomes more neceſſary; and even the time will come, when its activity will not be rapid enough, to connect ſo many parts together. Then, ſovereigns will conſider thought and reflection as oppoſite to their deſigns; and perhaps actuated by an ambition ſimilar to that of machiniſts

chiniſts, and mechanicians, their laſt reſearch will be to diſcover ſome ſecret to ſtop, or put in motion by a ſingle ſpring, all the wiſhes of their ſubjects. What a degradation of human nature! What a ſacrifice offered to the ambition of one man! Theſe ideas are indeed leſs ſenſible, when there are, in ſuch monarchies, as is the caſe at preſent, ſeveral ſovereigns endowed with a ſuperior ſpirit, and who being often agitated by different ſentiments, would wiſh to be able to reconcile the national genius which gives them perſonal ſatisfaction, with the military principles that are requiſite for their politicks; but men paſs away, and with them ſometimes are loſt all the mitigations that had no other ſupport but their character.

THE ſpirit of the reflections I have hitherto made, is not only applicable to the nations whoſe intereſts are regulated by the will of one man: I addreſs myſelf equally to you, GREAT NATION, (Great Britain) to whom the ſentiment of liberty imparts all its Powers! Let that energy of your ſouls, let that abundance and communi-

cation of knowledge which reſults from it, lead you to entertain the ſentiments of political humanity, that are ſo well connected with generous and extenſive ideas. Be not maſtered by an ardent deſire of wealth, nor by a proud confidence in yourſelves, nor by a perpetual jealouſy of other nations; and ſince the waves of the ocean free you from the imperious yoke of diſciplined armies, think that your firſt care is due to the preſervation of the precious government under which you live: tremble leaſt you one day become indifferent to it; if on account of thoſe exceſſive taxes which war accumulates on you, you expoſe the public and patriotic ſentiment from which your ſtrength and your happineſs have ſo long proceeded, to too ſevere conflicts with ſelf intereſt; in ſhort, as in every country, as ſoon as the temporary reign of private paſſions is over, men caſt a wiſhful look on that depoſit of the rights of men and of citizens, of which you are ſtill the guardians; think, that you are accountable to mankind for that liberty, whoſe laſt remains you preſerve, that if its traces ſhould ſoon happen to be eraſed in one part of the world, the type and remembrance

membrance of it may ſtill be found ſomewhere.

And you, riſing nation, whom generous efforts have freed from the yoke of Europe! Let the univerſe be ſtruck with ſtill greater reverence at the ſight of the privileges you have acquired, by ſeeing you continually employed for the public felicity: do not offer it as a ſacrifice at the unſettled ſhrine of political ideas, and of the deceitful combinations of warlike ambition; avoid, or at leaſt delay participating in the paſſions of our hemiſphere; make your own advantage of the knowledge which experience alone, has given to our old age, and preſerve for a long time, the ſimplicity of childhood: in ſhort, honour human nature, by ſhewing that when left to its own feelings, it is ſtill capable of thoſe virtues that maintain public order, and of that prudence which inſures public tranquillity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

OTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

WHAT more remains for me to ſay? I ought to ſtop here; for my feeble voice is not adequate to the majeſty of ſo great a ſubject; I preſume, however, to ſolicit this laſt moment of attention. Hitherto, it was under the ideas of public felicity, and in an exact comprehenſion of what conſtitutes real power, that I ſought for arguments to divert ſovereigns from a ſpirit of war and jealouſy; but I ſhould execute the taſk I have impoſed upon myſelf very imperfectly, if I did not endeavour to intereſt them in the truths, the defence of which I have

have undertaken, by the conſideration of their own perſonal happineſs: and it is to the diſcharge of this duty, that I deſtine the reflections I am going to offer.

SOVEREIGNS very ſoon grow tired of amuſements and vanities: pleaſures croud upon them, before they have time to wiſh for them, and they experience a full ſatiety of them, long before other men. Born in the midſt of the pomp of courts, and of the timorous reſpects of thoſe who ſurround them, they accuſtom themſelves from their infancy to the ſplendour of the throne, and its brilliant train ſtrikes their ſenſes no longer; they muſt therefore, have ſome object to intereſt them, or continual variety, to free them from the wearineſs that purſues them every where. Some conſtructed palaces and pyramids, to rouſe, as it were in their own breaſts, the idea of their greatneſs: others had an ambition to extend their dominions; and were not afraid to ſacrifice the blood and fortune of their ſubjects, to add ſome few leagues of land, to twenty or thirty thouſand they already poſſeſſed without enjoyment: a greater number, indifferent

indifferent to every thing, paſſed their reigns in ſloth and inactivity: but undoubtedly the moſt fortunate among them, were thoſe, who endowed at once with noble and ſenſible ſouls, experienced how ſatisfactory it was to be beneficent. It is only in the exerciſe of this virtue, that ſovereigns can find pleaſure continually regenerating; its objects are ſo extenſive, and ſo diverſified, that the ſentiment of it is never exhauſted; and it ſoon finds itſelf connected with ideas of regularity and order, which add freſh ſtrength to it, ſo that, whilſt falſe glory requires perpetual adulation, and only enjoys itſelf in the midſt of noiſe and acclamations, public beneficence adminiſters to thoſe who exerciſe it, conſolations adapted to each day, and to every moment; they are, as it were, an independent property, which neither time, nor men, nor their ingratitude can takea way.

What anxieties, what remorſe attends upon the moſt dazzling and renowned ambition, that of victories and conqueſts! A name indeed ſprings up and is recorded in hiſtory, from the midſt of battles and devaſtation,

vaſtation, from the midſt of thoſe heaps of aſhes, to which flouriſhing cities have been reduced by fire, and from thoſe fields, in which whole armies have found their graves; but it is the name of that ſovereign, who to glut his ideas of glory, commanded thoſe ravages, and willed thoſe devaſtations: it may be compared with reſpect to us, to thoſe extinguiſhed volcanos which formerly vomited ſulphur, and bitumen: the faint remembrance of which ſometimes excites our wonder: but thoſe horrid traces which a warlike and conquering prince leaves of himſelf long after his time, are no proofs that he enjoyed happineſs. I fancy I ſee ſuch a ſovereign, in the moſt ſplendid moment of his glory and of his triumph: at that inſtant in which, after having hearkened to the diſcourſes of his courtiers, and being intoxicated with their praiſes, he retires alone to his cloſet, holding in his hand, the particulars of the horrors of an engagement; there he reads the recital attentively, not as a man guided by ſimple curioſity, who having nothing to reproach himſelf with, ſeeks only to gratify his paſſion for variety; but rather as the author of ſo many evils, for every

every one of which, he is perhaps arraigned in his own conſcience. Then, on the eve of commanding more bloodſhed, on the eve of increaſing the burthen of the taxes, of aggravating the fate of his ſubjects, and of making them feel the weight of his conquering arm; how many melancholy reflections occupy his mind; how many gloomy ideas aſſail him! In that inſtant, he would wiſh to recall the crowd that ſurrounded him: return, would he willingly cry, return, and tell me, what it was that intoxicated me juſt now: you are gone, and I find myſelf as it were, in a frightful deſert: in ſolitude, I do not know even the traces of my firſt ſentiments: the light that dazzled me is extinguiſhed: my joys are fled; my glory is vaniſhed!

Such muſt be nearly, the ſeries of thoughts that take poſſeſſion of the victorious monarch left to himſelf: in the mean while, night comes on apace, darkneſs and ſilence cover the earth; peace ſeems to reign every where, except in his heart: the plaintive cries of the dying, the lamentations of diſconſolate families, the various calamities

of

of which he is the author, occur to his remembrance, and trouble his imagination: every thing gives him anxiety, every thing holds his mind in ſuſpenſe; a dream, the whiſtling of the winds, a clap of thunder are ſometimes ſufficient to agitate him, and to put him in mind of his inſignificancy. Who am I, does he unwillingly exclaim, to order ſo much devaſtation, and to be the cauſe of the ſhedding ſo many tears! born to be one of the benefactors of mankind, I am become its ſcourge! is that the uſe I ought to make of the treaſures at my diſpoſal, and of the power intruſted to me! either every thing in the univerſe exiſts without order, without any end, or motive; or, elſe, I have ſome account to give; and what will it be! It is in vain that to ſwell his pride, or to exculpate himſelf in his own eyes, the anxious monarch deſires to attribute his ſucceſſes and triumphs to the Supreme Being: he thinks he feels an inviſible hand that repels him, and ſeems to reject his gratitude. At laſt, diſtracted with theſe ideas, he endeavours to bury in ſleep, the hours that are ſo irkſome to him; impatient till the return of day, the ſplendour

dour of his court, and the multitude of his ſervants approach to diſpel his anguiſh, and renew his illuſions.

Ah! what a different ſcene is the life of a beneficent ſovereign! We ſeem as if paſſing from a ſtormy and tempeſtuous night, to one of thoſe pure and ſerene days in which the calmneſs of nature animates, in every being, the delight he feels in his exiſtence, and awakens the ſentiment of happineſs. A beneficent ſovereign finds a continual ſource of agreeable ſenſations, in the diſpoſition of his ſoul; and of intereſting objects, in the occupations of his mind: nothing in nature, or in the order of ſociety is indifferent to him, becauſe every thing is in ſome degree, or other, connected with the fate of men, and the meaſure of happineſs of which they are ſuceptible. By putting himſelf on a par with them, by his love for them and his reflections; he is not governed by that haughty pride which originates in the immenſe diſtance that ſovereigns generally ſet between their ſubjects and themſelves, and which leaves them, as it were, alone on the face of the earth: but he

he poſſeſſes that more ſublime and active ſenſation, which proceeds from a conſciouſneſs of what he is able to do for their happineſs. Laſtly, by learning in the early period of his life, not to think entirely of himſelf, but to live for others, a beneficent ſovereign lengthens the duration of his pleaſures; and old age, habit, and ſatiety which extinguiſh all the paſſions of men, ſeem to make a reſpectful exception to his. He, who makes all his power ſubſervient to the views of his ambition, ſoon experiences the reſiſtance offered by various events, diverſe intereſts, and limited means: he is like a pilot, who ſteers his ſhip through a ridge of rocks, and at every inſtant hears the cracking of the timbers that break, or are detached from the ſides. The ſovereign alſo, who makes it his earneſt buſineſs to attend to the proſperity of his kingdom, and the public welfare, undoubtedly meets likewiſe with difficulties; but thoſe obſtacles neither ſour his temper, nor exaſperate him: an honeſt intention creates a quiet conſcience, and a kind of harmony between our ſentiments and our duties; which even in the midſt of the

greateſt perplexities, maintains calmneſs and tranquillity in the breaſt of a good prince: ſo that, inſtead of flying, as it were, from his own thoughts, and thus ſhortening the moments of his life, he takes a delight in recollection and meditation, and in all thoſe actions of the ſoul, in which a man is juſtly ſatisfied with himſelf: the darkneſs of night, by recalling the moſt conſolatory recollections, ſeems to animate his ſolitude; the convulſions of agitated nature, inſtead of alarming his imagination, awaken ideas within him, that form an agreeable connection with his ſentiments; the love of mankind by which he is actuated, the ſpirit of public beneficence with which he is animated, the order that he delights in maintaining, inſpire him with the moſt generous thoughts; and by employing his reſources and his authority in promoting the happineſs of his ſubjects, he riſes to the comprehenſion of that Infinite Being, who, in the creation of the univerſe ſeems to have diſplayed as much beneficence, as power.

It is in this conſtantly clear current of ſentiments and actions, which correſpond with each other, that a beneficent ſovereign ſees his days ſmoothly glide along; and when old age informs him of the approach of the moment in which his ſtrength will fail him, he looks forward to that inevitable period with tranquillity; and when he is no longer able to act or adviſe, he takes a retroſpective view of his reign; and ſatisfied with the prudent uſe he has made of it, he gives himſelf up to thoſe hopes, which virtuous and ſenſible minds alone can entertain.

How very different is the cloſe of the life of that ſovereign, who was only acquainted with ambition, and a paſſion of war: how often does his laſt moment appear terrible to him, and of what little uſe are his moſt brilliant actions. Worn out by age and ſickneſs, when the ſhades of death ſurround him, and when he could wiſh to chace away the melancholy reflections that torment him, does he command his battles and victories to be brought to his recollection? Does he aſk to be reminded

of thoſe torrents of the blood of his enemies which he cauſed to be ſhed? Does he order thoſe trophies of victory to be unfurled before him, in which he might find the traces of the tears that watered them? No; all theſe ideas terrify him, all theſe recollections are troubleſome to him. *I have been too fond of war*, was the laſt ſpeech of the moſt powerful of kings; ſuch were the words he addreſſed to his great grandſon! Tardy regrets! which certainly did not ſuffice to calm the agitations of his ſoul! Ah! how much happier he would have been, if after a reign ſimilar to that of Titus and Antoninus, he had been, able to ſay to the young prince: I experienced all ſorts of pleaſures, I was acquainted with all kinds of glory: believe a dying king: I only found real content, in the good I was able to do; tread in my ſteps: entertain for your people, the ſame tender affection I felt for them: inſtead of deſtroying the eſtabliſhments I have formed for the proſperity of the ſtate; inſtead of rejecting my principles of order and economy; inſtead of aboliſhing the laws I promulgated for the benefit of the lower claſs, and the

alleviation of the wretched, proceed ſtill farther, and let our names, blended together, be equally bleſſed: but when in the early period of your reign, you ſhall hear the tumultuous acclamations that will be addreſſed to you, do not believe you are already in poſſeſſion of the love of your ſubjects, nor that it is ſo very eaſy to merit that ſentiment: conſider, that theſe firſt clamours are the cries of hope: the people have ſo many wants, and are ſo incapable of diſtinguiſhing the degree of good, which the beſt of kings may do them, that if the ſovereign whom they do not yet know, and of whoſe virtues or abilities they are yet ignorant, only leaves a free ſcope to their wiſhes, and expectations, he will always excite and ſatisfy the imagination. Let this idea increaſe your compaſſion for thoſe numerous beings, who from their ignorance, and affecting ſimplicity, believe that kings can redreſs all their grievances; and let it preſerve you from a premature pride. The only juſt opinion of us, is that which we leave behind us, the only glory, that which remains attached to our memory. My taſk is now at an end, and you are going to begin your's: yes, in a moment; thoſe

courtiers who ſurround me, will attend on you; in a moment, the drums of the guards will announce your acceſſion, and all the ſplendour of the throne will be diſplayed before your eyes. Do not ſuffer yourſelf to be dazzled by theſe brilliant ſeductions of the ſupreme rank; but more eſpecially, reſiſt thoſe wrong ideas of the greatneſs of kings, which ambitious, or intereſted men will endeavour to inculcate in you: you will be rendered envious of the power of other nations, before you have time to be acquainted with your own; you will be urged to deſtroy their felicity, before you have time to reflect on the good you may do to your own ſubjects; you will be ſolicited to overturn the peace of the world, before you have ſecured the maintenance of order within your own kingdom; and you will be inſpired with the deſire of increaſing your dominions, before you have even aſcertained what cares and informations are neceſſary to govern with prudence the ſmalleſt of your provinces. Miſtruſt, alas! that variety of projects with which they endeavour to ſeduce the ambition and vanity of ſovereigns, or to raiſe theſe paſſions

ſions in them: miſtruſt all thoſe ſyſtems with which they attempt to make them forget, both the limits of their faculties, the ſhortneſs of their life, and every thing that they have in common with other men: ſtay by me a little longer, my ſon! to learn, that the ſovereign of a moſt powerful empire, vaniſhes from the ſurface of the earth, with leſs noiſe than a leaf that falls from a tree, or a light that is extinguiſhed.

CHAP. XXXVI.

AND LAST.

IT is time to finiſh: it is time to put an end to the taſk I undertook, it has been laborious to me, not on account of the reſearches, the pains taken, or the perſevering meditation that ſuch a work required; but of the recollections, which in ſpite of me, united themſelves with all my ideas, and ſentiments. No perſon can diſcover ſooner than myſelf, how inadequate my abilities were to the talents requiſite to execute the plan I had conceived; but man, borne away by predominant ideas, ruſhes forward without meaſuring exactly, the ſpace he has to run over.

But

But after all, have I been ſo much deceived, that no advantage is to reſult from my intentions, and my endeavours? ſuppoſing even that no value is ſet on the reflections that appeared to me to bear ſome relation to the public welfare, nor on the emotions of a heart animated by great motives, I ſhall not be deprived of every ſatisfaction, if it is at leaſt perceived, that by collecting with regularity a multiplicity of intereſting informations, I have offered ſome aſſiſtance to the meditations of ſtateſmen, and of all thoſe who are candidates for the adminiſtration of public affairs. I ſhall even aſſert, that the utility of this part of my work does not depend on the exactneſs of all the particulars, but rather on the connection and regular order, which contributes to a more eaſy conception of the whole; and affords the means of diſcovering without trouble, the errors and alterations: thus much I may truly ſay, that even conſidering this work under that light, it is impoſſible for me to ſet a price on the aſſiſtance I ſhould have received from ſuch a treatiſe, or to determine what ſacrifices of my private fortune

I would

I would not have made to obtain it, if, when I took the reins of adminiſtration, ſomebody had offered it to me.

THIS aſſertion would not excite any wonder, if others knew by experience as well as I do, in what a ſtate of confuſion are all the ideas that may be uſeful to the public: inſomuch, that in the midſt of this diſorder, the adminiſtration of the finances is rather a ſchool to learn the means, than a ſtation capable of doing good, in an active and ſpeedy manner: ſome well affected miniſters have perhaps only wanted to penetrate into the chaos that preſented itſelf to their view, in order to concur efficaciouſly to the proſperity of the kingdom; and ſometimes alſo, they embraced the idea that all was well, in order to avoid the pains that became neceſſary to find out the traces of reaſon and truth, in the midſt of the darkneſs that ſurrounds adminiſtration.

SOME perſons, will ſay perhaps, that I ought to have been contented with giving to the department of the finances, the reſult

ſult of the reſearches and of the reflections to which I devoted myſelf during my retreat; but ſhould I have taken ſo much pains, ſolely, to increaſe that heap of papers which time covers with its duſt, after a clerk has made a few extracts from them, according to the meaſure of his abilities, or of his leiſure? Beſides, if on the one hand, it is important to multiply the means of inſtruction for thoſe who are one day to have a ſhare in the government, it is not leſs eſſential on the other, to inform and guide the tribunal before which they will be called to appear, which tribunal is that of public opinion. Let it not be doubted; general informations are what ſooner or latter will become the acting principle of the good of the ſtate: and ſo long as public opinion continues to be weak in its deciſion, uncertain in its knowledge, and inattentive, no powerful ſafe-guard will exiſt againſt errors, and wrong ſyſtems. Theſe were the reflections that anmiated me, when I undertook to depoſit ſome of my thoughts in this work: I have ſeen the very beſt inſtitutions have no other ſupport than the

man

man who conceived them; I have ſeen his plans and his labours diſappear with his perſon; I have ſeen miniſters of the finances make as light of the ideas of their predeceſſors, as if the ſovereign's authority had not conſecrated them; and I have ſeen the ſmalleſt ſhare of ſelf-love at every inſtant, get the better of the general views of order and perfection. Some remedy ought therefore to be found againſt this continual fluctuation: ſuch an unſettled adminiſtration muſt be curbed, and the attainment of this important object can only take place, through the progreſs of knowledge, and of the reſtraining power of public opinion. Undoubtedly, the inſtruction that is to guide that opinion, is only inſenſibly extended and ſtrengthened: but thoſe powerful dikes that are now capable of curbing the impetuoſity of the ocean, are nothing but grains of ſand accumulated and rendered compact by length of time.

NEITHER precepts, nor great examples have always ſpeedy effects; nor is their impreſſion univerſal; but intelligent men diſtinguiſh their traces, ſometimes, in what

is

is done, ſometimes, in what remains undone for want of courage; ſometimes, in the exact obſervation of good principles, and oftener, in their adoption in part; ſometimes, in a ſincere love of order and virtue, and ſometimes alſo, in a political affectation of that ſentiment: minds and characters aſſume different forms; but every thing is, more or leſs, finally influenced by the impulſe of the public. It is then its ignorance and indifference that are moſt to be feared; and that general careleſſneſs, which cauſing it to neglect great and uſeful ideas, and to leave a free ſcope to the errors of thoſe who govern ſeems to abandon the world to its own fate. Alas! (muſt it be ſaid) the time perhaps preſſes, to talk to men about the public good: perhaps there is not a moment to loſe, in fixing their attention on the various relative objects that unite them to each other: they every day become more perſonally ſelfiſh, every day ſome tye is relaxed, and the ſpirit of indifference makes a freſh progreſs: they are ſtill ſenſible to the antient denominations, of honour, and of one's own country, but their

their acceptation becomes leſs extenſive, and they ſerve much more as a pretence for the deſtructive paſſions, than as a motive for beneficent ideas: laſtly, ſince the virtues ſeem to require more than ever, to be made conſpicuous, in order to be exerciſed, it becomes infinitely eſſential that public opinion ſhould excite people to be virtuous: that opinion ought therefore to be ſupported, and to be guided; it ought to be called to the aſſiſtance of the ideas, that are really intereſting to the felicity of mankind.

Let then the motive and the aim of this work be excuſed: I was encouraged to it, not from any preſumption, or any wrong idea of my abilities; but it ſeemed to me, that I was under very uncommon circumſtances, and that I owed ſome acknowledgment for the chance that collected them: in fact, if we fix our attention on the long ſeries of miniſters of the finances, we ſhall find, with very few exceptions; that ſome of them died during the courſe of their miniſtry; that others, and they are the moſt numerous claſs,

preſided in that department, as if they were not poſſeſſed of it, or as if it was an office of mere parade, or a ſinecure; and that all the knowledge they retired with, was an enumeration of the various buſineſs of their department, and a liſt of all the individuals on whom they had conferred obligations, and of all the ungrateful people they deſervedly met with: that ſeveral miniſters, without any fixed principles, and without any opinion of their own, were led all manner of ways, by the diverſe perſons in whom they placed a blind confidence, in ſo much that even the good of which they were the paſſive inſtruments, was not the reſult of any regular chain of ideas; and from the inſtant they were removed from public affairs, they found themſelves in a deſert, and as it were ſeparated from their own actions: they may have had ſome recollection and knowledge of what they had ſeen, but even the moſt perfect remembrance does not ſuffice to enable a man to form all his knowledge and information into one compact body of facts, and all very extenſive calculations are a continual ſource of errors and of confuſion, when di-

veſted

veſted of that intelligence of mind which diſtinguiſhes probabilities, and which, with the aſſiſtance of accommodations and compariſons, offers a freſh guide in the ſearch of truth.

I MAY truly ſay, that in ſome reſpects at leaſt, my ſituation was different from thoſe I have juſt delineated. I was early conſcious of the neceſſity I was under of ſupporting myſelf; and I placed no unbounded confidence in any man: I ſought for inſtructions every where: I heard: I conſulted; but having always rendered the ideas of others ſubſervient to my own reflections, I found myſelf in my retreat as it were in poſſeſſion of the ſame capital, as during my adminiſtration, and perhaps, a little richer, becauſe I had then more time to beſtow on meditation. The order in which I endeavoured to ſet the various informations I ſucceſſively acquired, has made them my own: and as I always adapted them to ſome plan, or to ſome idea, now that I find myſelf like all other miniſters out of place, without aſ-

ſiſtance

ſiſtance from, or communication with thoſe at the head of affairs, I have been able to form a collection of my informations, and of my ideas. Laſtly, though I was ſcarcely five years, miniſter of the finances, I may venture to ſay, that ſpace of time was longer for me, than for moſt men: I was not diſtracted by any pleaſure, nor any idea of fortune; nor by any wiſhes to ingratiate myſelf with the great, or thoſe in favour; nor by any of thoſe actions, which one muſt endeavour to conceal: nor yet by any of thoſe prejudices which one muſt always endeavour to juſtify: in ſhort, I quitted the helm of public affairs at an age, in which my ſoul had not yet loſt any of that activity without which every idea of public good is languiſhing; I thought therefore that peculiarly circumſtanced as I was, it would ſhow a kind of indifference, if I ſpent the reſt of my life in idleneſs; and I flattered myſelf that in the proſecution of a new ſpecies of labour, my intentions would at leaſt met with a favourable indulgence.

An explanation may perhaps be expected, of the reaſons that induced me to print this work, without having previouſly ſubmitted it to the reviſion of one of the royal cenſors: I thought I was able to exerciſe his functions in my own behalf: I thought I owed that mark of reſpect to truths which concern the happineſs of mankind, to dare to ſubmit them in a direct manner to the public judgment: I thought, more eſpecially, that it was not before the tribunal of a few ſelfiſh, trifling paſſions that objects ſo intereſting ought to be brought. Beſides, I cannot think it poſſible that a work can be diſapproved, in which the pureſt morality has been the guide of my ſentiments, and of my expreſſions, in which I have ſo clearly manifeſted the ſtrength and power of France, and in every part of which I have ſhewn reſpect to individuals, to the corporate bodies of the ſtate, and to thoſe opinions that are founded on the laws, and on the nature of the government. If this confidence of mine was not well founded, and if thoſe whoſe enmity I have already experienced, are to triumph over me once more; that

that internal ſentiment which has already ſupported me, again ſhall be my conſolation.

In fact, what am I, who have ſo few years to live! what am I, in compariſon with a ſingle uſeful truth, or a ſingle inſtructive information, which if it chance to fall on a fertile ſoil, will produce for a long time, the moſt ſalutary conſequences! All perſonal calculations are erroneous; and ſooner or later, time unveils the moſt ſeducing illuſions: man finds trouble, where he looked for nothing but content; wearineſs where he flattered himſelf with habitual enjoyments; and diſguſts where he expected to find nothing but glory: he ſees the phantoms of his imagination appear, and vaniſh in the ſame inſtant: the accompliſhment of his hopes, the triumphs of his vanity, the ſucceſſes of his ambition, ſet theſe paſſions in their true light; and he ſtands in need of a continual renewal of taſtes, wiſhes, and inclinations, in order to enable him to get through the ſhort ſpace of his life. It is therefore neceſſary, on this tu-

multuous ſtage, to rely on ſome principle; and the only one that can be applied to all events, that can ſerve as a guide to perſonal intereſt in its doubts, and that can reſiſt its temptations, is a deeply inculcated conſciouſneſs of our ſocial duties, and a noble idea of order, and of virtue. We muſt firmly adhere to that great chain by which man is united in ſociety, his mind to the knowledge of the public good, his ſoul to every generous ſentiment, and his feeble exiſtence to the moſt ſublime of all ideas: then we may ſecurely truſt ourſelves; then we may believe we are ſafely moored, and in the midſt of the illuſions of this world, our opinions will acquire ſtability: then, more eſpecially, we ſhall feel ourſelves eager to apply our faculties to the objects that increaſe the uſe made of them, and which ſeem to augment our worth in our own eyes: then alſo, we ſhall become acquainted with true rewards, and heart felt conſolations: and when the end of all vanities approaches, when the time arrives in which, the ſhades of the inevitable night of death begin to ſurround us, we ſhall find ourſelves more

reconciled to that obſcure futurity, we ſhall approach it with more tranquillity; and the feeling mind, at leaſt will not have its anxieties increaſed, by regrets for loſt time; for hours trifled away; and for talents, either neglected, or abuſed.

THE END.

GENERAL TABLE

Of the GROSS SUMS enumerated in the courſe of this Work; and of their amount in ENGLISH MONEY.

	FRENCH LIVRES.	ENGLISH STERLING. £.	s.	d.
Total amount of the TAXES annually levied on the inhabitants of France, (1) -	585,000,000	24,375,000	0	0
Annual expences of the State, including the civil and military eſtabliſhments - -	610,000,000	25,416,666	13	4
Expences of collecting the taxes - - -	58,000,000	2,416,666	13	4
Annual amount of the IMPORTATIONS -	230,000,000	9,583,333	6	8
Ditto of the EXPORTATIONS - -	300,000,000	12,500,000	0	0
Ditto balance of Commerce - - -	70,000,000	2,916,666	6	8
Annual intereſt of the national debt, (2)	207,000,000	8,625,000	0	0
Annual charge of the army (3) -	124,650,000	5,193,750	0	0

	French Livres.	English Sterling. £.	s.	d.
Annual charge of the navy - - -	45,200,000	1,883,333	6	8
Amount of gold and ſilver coin, ſuppoſed to be actually exiſting in the kingdom	2,200,000,000	91,666,666	13	4
Suppoſed annual increaſe - - -	40,000,000	1,666,666	13	4

(1) Mr. Necker adds the revenue of the Royal Demeſnes and ſome other incomes to the taxes, in order to bring this article nearer to a balance with the next. See Vol. III. page 407.

(2) The amount of the debt itſelf is not given.

(3) The ordnance expences are included in this, and the next article.

The eſtimate in Engliſh money is made at the rate of twenty four livres, to the pound ſterling, and as this is the exact par of exchange, it will be an eaſy operation to divide any of the inferior ſums contained in the details, in order to know their amount in Engliſh money.

7 0073